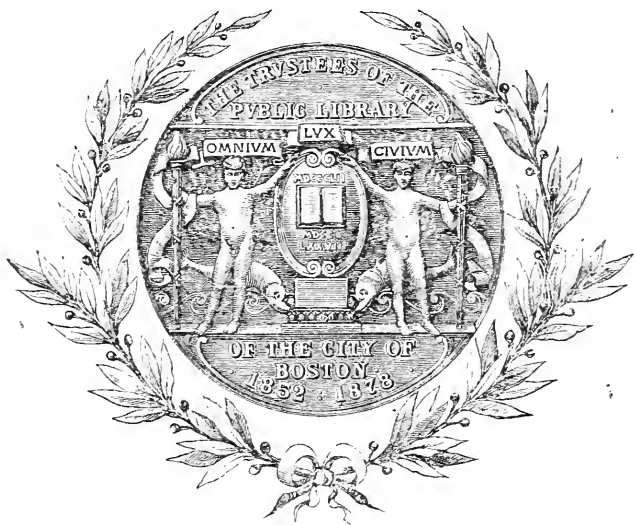




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JETTA

OR

HEIDELBERG UNDER THE ROMANS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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JETTA

OR

HEIDELBERG UNDER THE ROMANS.

A HISTORICAL NOVEL

BY

GEORGE TAYLOR. [Henschel.]

496545

[Hanserath, Adolft]

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY SUTTON F. CORKRAN

(TRANSLATOR OF «KLYTIA»).

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AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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JETTA.

CHAPTER I.

THE war with the Lentian Alemanni was a protracted one. True it is that Rothari's influence induced the king of the Breisgau to dissolve his alliance with the enemies of Rome, and as he himself always appeared as a thorough Alemann, to increase threefold the forces of his German mercenary troops, but during the whole of that summer the campaign was carried on at times on this side, at the others on the other side of the Rhætian confines, and at the break of winter the Lentians were all the less inclined for peace as they felt themselves superior during this severe season to the effeminate Romans, and calculated with certainty on the freezing over of the Rhenus to make advantageous raids into Gallia.

Thus Jetta sat solitary and alone under her thatched roof, exclusively occupied with the care of her infant. But the child would not prosper. Pale and delicate it hung at its mother's breast and its blue eye seemed to seek something to which it had a right and which no one offered him. An expression of pain lay ever on its wee shrunken face, and told of the continuous discomfort of the little being, whose little fists were often angrily doubled.

The old Phorkyas had settled herself down on the Bühl all the more comfortably since the departure of Rothari. She sat at Jetta's side and told her of her child's life, and who is it who is not willingly instructed as to one's young days, about parents or grandparents, and if the old woman began to rave and phantasyse and that the limits between recollection and dream were hard to draw in the description given by the aged hag, nevertheless it was a distraction to Jetta in the complete solitude in which she lived to listen to these stories of by-gone days. The old woman knew also how to relate horrible tales of her magic experiences, how Justina in her presence only through her word of command had caused vipers to open

their jaws, joined together as whole, serpents which had been cut into bits, and leaning over a corpse had given commands to the dead man to fulfil in the world below, which the latter had executed, as the result proved. Jetta rather doubted the truth of these stories, although she believed Justina capable of such things. When this theme also was exhausted Phorkyas took to bringing in herbs and roots, taught Jetta their names, which the latter wrote down in a parchment garnished with all sorts of cabbalistic signs, together with the manner and way in which each herb was to be used and each potion prepared. This was indeed the most beneficial part of the old woman's magic, as Jetta later learned to know. The men also began to feel the yoke of old Phorkyas. "She has lost no tooth out of her head," they were wont to say, for they experienced some biting remarks from the old woman and dreaded her evil eye.

Rothari's absence had brought with it the worst kind of days for the dumb furry member of the house. Phorkyas' first care had been, to order the wolf which she detested to be chained up. Had she not found its protection useful, she would have availed herself of her master's absence

to poison the animal. Thus the wolf lay resenting in its kennel and considered the world from a new standpoint. Howlingly did it beg each passer-by for release, but it had yet to learn that man feels no pity for the sufferings of creation. In consequence, though it was consumed with hatred against the whole race, and even though it had accustomed itself to endure its household companions in silence, it nevertheless sprang with violence at every new individuum of the hated species and howled with rage at not being able to rend them. It especially hated the workmen who carried heavy loads on their heads. It seemed utterly absurd that such masses should stagger about on such wretched supports and two legs. It did not meet with its approbation that the moon should swim about in the air at night and for this cause would it bay at it for hours. When the old Phorkyas then called it a stupid brute, it was inwardly enraged, for on the contrary it was conscious of the superiority of all quadrupeds even mentally. Did it not thoroughly understand what men said to it, "Seize, hold, bring, go, come, carry, watch, lie down?" Men had evidently up to the present been unable to under-

stand the meaning of its barking and howling. Did it wish to drink they brought salt meat, did the inhabitants and residents of its hairy coat tickle it, they beat her. By long and bitter experiences it had convinced itself, that these pale faces were certainly not to be numbered among the mammalia capable of being educated. "They are proud of their speech," it growled, "and yet cannot understand one another. Did ever any misunderstand the signs which a hare makes with its ears when it lays them back or pricks them up, or the motions of its tail? A wolf, it is true, cannot read books as does the Domina, but it reads in the faces of men and beasts much better than she." Morally all self-command was entirely failing to man. Had it not learnt the difficult art of strangling its foe till Rothari ordered it, in spite of the great efforts that that cost it? Men on the other hand, since it was bound, hit at it with sticks and threw stones at it, and why?—because it howled when feeling pain. But was that an answer? In consequence of such experiences its heart was hardened and a grim hatred to all bipeds arose within it. Their sympathy was not to be reckoned upon, so

it pondered over other means of freedom and from a given moment its howling ceased. No sign of its indignation was now heard, at the most it rattled its chain or lashed the kennel with its tail, which sounded at night with loud bangs. During the day it lay quietly curled up in the kennel, out of which its lurid green eyes gleamed in an uncanny manner. It did not reveal to any one this change in its disposition. It had finally learnt to help itself. As Jetta once visited it and comforted it, it threw it down at her feet and rubbed its neck so sadly on the grass, that she had pity on its sufferings and loosened the collar, thinking that it was too tight. From that time the wolf knew how to skilfully widen the strap more and more and gradually learnt with much trouble to draw its head in and out of the collar. So soon as the house became quiet, it freed itself of its chain, crept to a quiet place in the pallisade enclosure, where it had dug itself out a cunningly devised trench after the manner planned out by the Roman soldiers and Vegetius. Through this it joyfully made for the open. A happy life in the woods now began. At one time it hunted on Mons Valentiniani, at an-

other it swam across the Nicer, to free itself of vermin, or crept into the villas of the rich to steal a chicken, or frightened the Roman outposts on guard in the neighbourhood of the camp. With all that it observed the rule of all cunning thieves, not to soil its own nest, so that no shadow of suspicion fell "on the good beast" as Jetta said, which surrendered itself to its fate as a lamb, and lay then chained quiet and harmless by day and night without a sound of murmur at its hard lot. Thus did it cunningly know how to unite to the advantages of a free vagabond life the benefits of well ordered feeding times. But the wolf was not quite contented with its rôle, as it found that the bend to hypocrisy so specifically that of man sat badly on it. Another experience cast a shade on its new joy. At times it happened that when hunting it was caught up by members of its own family. Then was it badly jacketed, as they immediately recognised it as the servant of men, tamed and wretchedly effeminate. In such cases it made for the court with great bounds and with its tail miserably curled between its legs slunk ashamed into the kennel. "Can my brethren possibly be as stupid as these silly men," it

thought. "They only know what is expressly said to them, whilst one sniff suffices for my brethren, to find out my entire history, my past, and my fundamental theories." Thus it found out by experience that even belonging to a higher race had also its discomforts, and in such hours of sadness it envied the peaceful existence of Lupicinus under whose special charge it was, for belonging to so easily deceived and mentally weak a species.

Thus did the inhabitants of the blockhouse pass their days amidst the most varied experiences. Already the maples before the hut were turning red and yellow and the crickets sang their chirping song in the new mown fields. Jetta still remained on the Bühl, occasionally visited by the pale wife of the suffering centurio and by the female attendants of Arator's house—by men only when one returned from the field to have his wounds attended to, or to accompany transports from the camp to the scene of war on the upper Rhenu. They then told her of Rothari's bravery and how he at the head of his German allies comported himself as a thorough "German," a thing terrible to behold.

One evening, as the sun was sinking over

Mons Vosegus and that the plain shimmering in a violet line lay stretched out before Jetta's gaze, she sat suckling her child near the fountain in front of the house, when a man's steps disturbed her. When she turned round she saw standing near her a wild looking young man with shaggy fair hair and beard, who kept his eyes fixed on the child, as it drank in long draughts of his mother's milk, till Jetta indignantly covered herself. On looking closer at the stranger whose clothing consisted of a long hairy garment and a sheep's skin, the thought shot through her head that this might indeed be the brother of her husband, about whom Rothari had spoken with so much love and pity. She had never imagined Vulflaich could have been so haggard and ghastly, and even Rothari would not have recognised him, such a change had taken place in the youth in the year which he had spent living together with bishops and monks, then as pilgrim and hermit. The cheek-bones stuck out of the wasted pale face, the eyes had sunk in and were surrounded by deep shadows. Sharp wrinkles about the mouth gave the face an expression of intense bitterness. This broken-down youthful form tottered about

like some madman consumed by a secret fire. Jetta in her terror turned to enter the house, when the stranger in a subdued indifferent voice asked, when Rothari was likely to return. "Certainly not before the winter," replied Jetta, "and it is then uncertain whether the war will then be at an end." Did he wish that she should send any message by the next messenger to Rothari? He had nothing to tell, he then said, except that he had done nothing, as Rando, to whom Rothari had sent him, would enter into no negotiations so long as the war lasted. Jetta asked, if she could refresh the brother of her husband with food and drink? He sadly nodded his head, and when Phorkyas had carried out bread and milk he slowly ate his food, entrancedly gazing at Jetta's arms, whose entire beauty was disclosed to the eye by the sleeveless garment. The sun went down, and under the pretext of putting the child to sleep Jetta entered the house and sent out a servant man, who in case Rothari's brother had no lodging for the night should offer him a room for the night in the outhouse. Vulfilaich accepted the invitation in silence. But two gleaming eyes from out of the kennel followed the stranger mistrustingly,

and the wolf determined under these peculiar circumstances not to leave the house that night. The monk strode in silence to the room prepared for him, when he sank down sad and weary on a bench. "Lord," he prayed, "temptations fall upon me even to despondency. Myself a sinner I wander restlessly on the face of the sin-stained earth. I wished to convert the heathen to thy holy name, and they mocked me, I wished to overturn the altars of the false Gods, but my strength was too weak. Like a mad dog have they driven away the king's son, who wished to proclaim thee, the king. My soul is weary of all the idle words which I hear. Wherever I behold, I see idolatry, vanity and sin. Not to see hast thou given me these eyes, but to weep over the misery within me and around me. Of me it is written: I mix my drink with my tears by night and by day. And not alone with the wickedness of man have I to struggle. Satan himself smites me with his fists, and when my weary eyelids close wicked spirits appear before me and terrify me, lure me and tempt me, so that my soul often despairs and doubts. My harp has become a mourning and my pipe a weeping, says the prophet. Lord, take me

away, I am not better than my fathers." Still and patient lay the monk on the hard floor, heedless of the cushions spread along the wall. But only restless broken dreams excited his half sleeping senses. Often before had wicked dæmons visited him as wild beasts or fair women, but so plainly as on this day had he never felt the propinquity of the prince of darkness. Soon he heard the whining, howling and moaning of the souls of the damned. Then fists hammered against the wooden partition, as if the devil sought his own, and he plainly heard the rattling of the chain, to which Satan was bound, and the gnashing of his teeth. Sank sleep upon his eyes then did licentious dreams mock his senses. Once more was he lying upon the warm breast of the fair German woman who had nursed him on the banks of the Nicer. Jetta's white arms encircled him and as he sprang up, he again heard the rustling of the chain and the hammering of the evil spirit who sent him all these wicked thoughts. An irresistible power seemed to drive him from his couch. Even if it cost him his life and future happiness he must steal over to the house where the beauteous woman lay and listen whether he could hear her breathing, whether

he could gaze at her lovely form as she slept. The moon shone full and clear over the court which separated him from Jetta's house. He saw Rothari's weapons gleaming and shining in the halls. Perhaps the door leading into the halls was open and steps led to the rooms above. Against his will with beating heart and catching breath he stole out. It was a sin, but he must do it, unless a higher power broke the charm. He reached the wooden stair-case at the other end of the court, when suddenly two green eyes flashed on him, the wicked one in the form of a wolf sprang towards him, he felt himself knocked down, pieces of his garments were torn off his back, then he summoned all the strength left him, the wicked one left him, and trembling all over the monk found himself once more in his room, where he threw himself on the ground, picked up a scourge and flogged himself on the naked back till the hot blood poured down his body.. Thus he lay till a bright gleam over Mons Valentiniani announced the break of day. Conscious of his guilt he dared not await the waking of the inmates of the house. Throwing his sheep's skin around him, he went out into the morning air. As he passed the kennel and the

wolf ground its teeth, the thought struck him that the rattling and sighing which he had heard might have come from there. But when the beast fixed its flaming eyes upon him he recognised the dæmon. He tore the wooden bolt from the gate and flew out into the dawning morn. The fresh autumn strewn glittering dew-drops over grass and thicket. The young monk brushed it away from the branches as he hastened onward at random, seeking some dry place on which he could lie down as his throbbing head threatened to burst. Perhaps would yonder rock overhanging the wood procure him shelter? A while he sought hither and thither, at last bending back some branches he found the entrance to the cave. It was the same in which the dæmon from which he flew had been born. The cave was dry and moderately lighted by a pleasant half-light cast by the reflection of the red sandstone. The entrance seemed as if artificially draped by a light green curtain, which swayed in the wind, as the thick beech boughs waved to and fro. A roomy rocky dome arched itself within and opened to the left into a dry and dark passage as if fashioned for the resting place of some anchoret. Thankfully did Vulfilaich cast him-

self down. He had found what he had long vainly sought. In the entire valley of the Rhenus was there no cave better suited when cut off from the world to ponder over the peace of one's soul. Here would he remain, praying, castigating, preaching to the heathen, destroying pagan images and lost to all come back here once more to gather in prayer strength for fresh struggles. He cleaned the cave from the leavings of its former inhabitants, gathered dried twigs from the forest, with skilful hand set fire to some moss with a spark which he struck from a steel and drove away through prayer and smoke both the evil smells and wicked spirits. After that the blue vapour had slowly disappeared he lay down inside the cave and soon sank into a deep sleep.

Jetta was not a little astonished to hear the next morning that Vulfilaich had disappeared without a greeting, also at Phorkyas' report that she had found his couch untouched, the boards stained with blood, and portions of his dress strewn about the yard. But what accident could have happened to him in the well-guarded house? She quieted herself by ascribing this curious departure to the usual seclusion of this monk and was glad that

she was so quickly freed from so uncomfortable a visitor. Before long also Lupicinus informed her that he had met Vulfilaich in the woods, but that the latter had rudely refused to acknowledge any former acquaintance. He had however finally asked for a spade and hatchet, neither of which Lupicinus had refused to his master's brother. The monk was now gathering berries, moss, and roots, and Lupicinus supposed that he wished to build himself a little hut in some cleft as the hermit had done who formerly lived on Mons Piri and was known to all, till one morning he was found in front of his cell slain by some wicked youths. Jetta shook her head at all this, but did not consider that it was her affair, to trouble herself any further about so eccentric a saint.

Winter set in that year in the most sudden manner. A cold November storm arose one night which swept the leaves from off the branches, whilst the frozen ground glittered with rime. Rain and snow blew around the straw huts and the recollection of all that she had undergone in those dark rooms the year previous, caused the Roman lady to take a dislike to the house. The wind rattled by night and day against the windows, the

barking of the wolves was heard quite close, and since Rothari had given up hunting them with hounds they wandered even up to the Bühl. Moreover Phorkyas was never weary of assuring her that the air lower down on the sunny slope in the heated brick rooms was more healthy for the child than up on the hill where roared the east wind. So finally Jetta packed her goods together, left the house in charge of the men and returned to her father's house. How happy she felt herself once more in those bright courts, the warm rooms, among the gay images on the walls which smiled on her as in by-gone years and towards which the child stretched out its little hand with a weak smile. For the first time she became aware of how mentally void her life had been in the blockhouse. With the ravenousness of one famished did she throw herself on the long neglected collection of books and soon forgot over Plàto, Plutarch and Epictetus everything else. Early in the new year Statius and Nasica returned from the war. The fat Statius had received a slight scratch, Nasica declared he needed rest. Both had been expelled from the army with disgrace, as the one had caused a scandal through negligence, the other

through cowardice; though they took care not to inform Jetta of the cause of their return. The two cousins were indeed both unpleasant men, whom Jetta could never respect, but nevertheless they bore the impress of aristocracy, which the Roman possesses rather than the German. Wearied of solitude Jetta accepted the attention of these vain men and once more was adopted that empty noisy tone between the beauteous woman and her two cousins, which Jetta had formerly permitted in her camp life on account of her lofty aspirations, and which now served at least to dispel her low spirits. Her earnest mind demanded a counterpoise, and when once she gave way to joking and mirth, her wild eccentricity of thought easily overmatched the others. It was a temptation to her phantasy to throw herself into extravagant situations. This endeavour to be always figuring, to take every event in a phantastic light was her great charm, it was also her fault which she had to conceal from Rothari, to whom nothing was more disagreeable than so much ado about nothing. Surrendering herself up again utterly regardless with her old companions to this impulse gave back to her former enjoyment of life and bustle, and at the same

time her pristine freshness and elasticity of mind returned. For the first time she became aware of how Rothari by his mental heaviness and immobility had weighed her down. Thus Jetta resembled a singer who has regained her lost voice. From morning till evening the floods of her eloquence were loosened. Now again she was quite the Roman, the Jetta of former days, yet her life was in no way spent in mere laugh and jest. Indefatigably was she ever visiting both the villages on either side of the Nicer, to aid the women and children left behind by the soldiers, she encouraged by her presence even the wounded in the camp, who had been brought back from the seat of war, she kept up the spirits of the Roman coloni in the whole neighbourhood. It was a pleasure to see how the faces of the old grey-beards in the soldiers' huts lighted up, when the general's daughter came into them and how in the civil settlements old and young surrounded Jetta when she came to announce a new victory.

One thing weighed her down: her child was a source of anxiety. Slowly did he grow up and looked pale and sad with his clear blue eyes into the world. The old woman invented every day a

new means of making him stronger. She had wine potions and strong broths ready, salves and pomades, herb baths and washes. Thus fortifying and weakening were ever changing, as suited the fancies of the young mother or the unoccupied idleness of the old nurse. The child became taller, but thinner and more languid. A fearful expression seemed permanently fixed on the little yellow face as protest against the continual ill treatment with which an incapable love worried him. In the spring Arator also returned and the earnest look of the father soon drove away the cousins, as the old soldier did not conceal from his relations what he thought of their conduct in the field. Jetta's thoughts likewise returned more frequently to Rothari, of whose praise Arator was full. Scarcely had the March wind begun to blow more mildly, when she returned to the blockhouse to await her husband's arrival, where the wolf received her with frantic bounds of joy, and the men with all due respect. She found everything in the best order; not a thread was missing and Jetta gave all honour to the honesty and industry of the German servants. Thus she took up again her former style of life, but waited in vain for her husband.

As the primulas in the woods worked their way through the hard soil in yellow tufts, the narcissi and Adoni's blood'sdrops(anemonies)bloomed before the house, she then thought that Rothari could not be far away. But the violets came and the blue stars of the vinca, the lilac shed its sweet perfume, the roses bloomed, and the jasmine hedges were decked with white stars, in the bushes the nightingale sang her love song and yet Rothari was not there. Instead of him the Italian cousins Statius and Nasica had made themselves at home in Rothari's house. They rode Rothari's horses along stony roads and brought them in at nights done up and footsore, so that the German slaves cursed them as Italian persecutors of animals. They teased the wolf bound to his chain, till his exertions to set himself free caused them to fly. They took down Rothari's weapons from the wall and mocked at the barbaric work. "Who knows, Statius, if thou can'st span the bow when Ulysses returns," jeered Jetta. The cousins then named her Penelope and this pleased the young woman, lonely and unoccupied as she must needs be. It suited her phantastic mind to act a piece out of the Odyssey after that she had so long dreamt of the Iliad.

She could not help feeling contempt for her suitors and they certainly rendered themselves obnoxious. Not a single piece of Rothari's booty remained untouched by them, and they performed more than one masquerade with his German weapons. At times Jetta would gladly have put a stop to their antics, but her cousins were necessary to her on her missions to the camp, however much she hated their impudence. Commissions had to be executed in the villages and soldiers' huts. She reckoned on their escort when she returned at a late hour from visiting the poor and the wounded. The small comforts which she prepared for the soldiers in the camp could only be bestowed by her. She also comforted herself that if Nasica and Statius now wasted their days and might not have gathered laurels in the last war, still both, encouraged by intercourse with her, might yet earnestly intend at a future date to take her husband's place. The improvement of her young relations seemed to her to be part of her lofty mission, of which she now dreamt as in the days previous to becoming Rothari's wife. It is true that by a strict self-examination she would have found out that in this intercourse she was rather a scholar than a teacher.

The incessant mockery of her cousins at Rothari's germanism, at the peasant hut and the barbaric implements made a greater impression upon her than she liked to admit and she was thoroughly determined not to continue this life in the Alemannian court. If Rothari did not wish to live in the camp below among his comrades, he should at all events build a Roman house for her here, to do which workmen might be found in Alta Ripa and Noviomagus, but she would no longer be denied the requirements of her youth, of her sense of beauty, of her vision, of her mind. Above all her son must not grow up in the blockhouse. Naturally the cousins confirmed her plans. They already sought with her the most favorable spot for a new villa and leaning over the board of smooth linden-wood they helped Jetta to draw plans and sketches, till they themselves felt weary of that also and returned to Rothari's weapons.

Yet another day had been wasted in this wise, when one evening in May, as the sun sank behind Mons Vosegus and the whole Rhine valley gleamed in golden light, the "heilo Sigo" of the German men-servants was heard, whilst the wolf uttered a joyous howl and tore at his chain. The

fat Statius, wearing one of Rothari's helmets and with the barbaric ornaments of king Vadomar round his neck, stretched his head out of the window to see what the matter was, but meeting the infuriated glance of the incomer turned back at a quick run into the hall, where he whispered to Jetta, "the barbarian thy husband is outside." Quickly did the other throw aside the bearskin in which he had wrapt himself, whilst Jetta with the child on her arm hastened to the door. On the stairs she met a gigantic German whose long fair hair had been rolled up in a large knot on the top of his head and then bound round with a flaming-red band. An immense mustache hung down from the upper lip over the shaved chin, a heavy chain was round his neck, the golden armlets taken from some vanquished foe gleamed upon his bare arms. He held in his hand the German battle-axe, trews of deer-hide and the bear-skin around his shoulders completed the picture of a savage. Jetta started back as if she had received a blow in the face. "Why tremblest thou, Jetta?" asked Rothari, bitterly, "even thy cousins, as I see, love the dress of my people." His men had already informed him of the doings of her relations. He cast a dark

look through the door, but Statius and Nasica had thought it better to escape through a back-gate. With a pitying shake of the head Rothari then looked at his infant boy, who turned his head away in fright and began to cry. He did not take him, for he feared to break the delicate little thing. Jetta gave him to the old woman, whose evil eye returned mockingly Rothari's angry look, the young wife however followed her husband into the house. Then she quietly took the heavy bear-skin from his shoulders, loosened the barbaric armlets from his arms, smoothed the beard from his lips which she kissed, and passing her hand over the hideous knot of hair, asked with a beseeching look, "must it remain like this?"

"So long as I lead Germans into the field, yes," he replied. "Only the slaves with us are shorn, and what you call the head of a Cæsar, we should name the pate of a slave. When war is over we offer up the locks to Aphrodite and hide our bare arms in the toga." The prospect of living among her people as wife of this chieftain exposed daily to the jeering looks of her cousins, of the notarius and of the young Augustus, infuriated Jetta, but something moved within her like a bad conscience at having permitted

Statius' and Nasica's jokes and for that day she said nothing. It also struck her that she had once read in the book of the Christians about a warrior whose hair his wife cut off as he slept. She would also act in the same manner and she gave in.

CHAPTER II.

JETTA'S hopes of attaining her end through entreaties, were not fulfilled. The inclinations and wishes of husband and wife were more than ever diverse. If Jetta during his absence had returned to the Roman customs of her youth, so had Rothari in the field and through his intercourse with the German mercenaries become once more thoroughly an Alemann. As a consequence of this they both had thoroughly opposite ideas as to the arrangement of their house. She had told him of her plans for building a Roman villa on the Bühl, and he refused this dear desire of her heart with angry words. She had begged him to lay aside the barbaric dress, and he had mocked her horror as a childish fancy. To maintain his influence among the Alemanni he must live and appear as Ale-

mann—so had he argued, but did not deem it necessary to explain further this necessity. His opinion was, that this was not one of the things a man should talk to a woman about. Jetta was proudly conscious of her exemplary behaviour during his absence, to him, however, the wonted free intercourse of the Roman woman with young men appeared almost as a breach of trust. Down-cast and weary the young wife now sat in the hall of her blockhouse, too sad to take heed of the daily events which went on outside. She heard the harsh words of her husband from the court. His voice sounded curt and hard and pained her weary heart. As he went about in the bright day-light in his chieftain's costume through these rooms, her entire surroundings seemed changed. They were now no longer a Roman couple who had the caprice of housing here on the confines of the Alemanni in a German hut, but she had become the spoil of a barbarian against her wish. She seemed to herself to be like one of those noble women, whom Armin, son of Sigimer, carried away, or whom one of the besiegers of the castellum Drusi on the broken down boundary wall forced to become his own. She only was now Roman in this house and

she resembled one of the Roman vessels standing in the corner, which no longer suited her; whoever saw her together with the wild inmates of the house and Rothari, must have taken her for a prisoner or a slave. "Where is that Jetta," she sighed, "who rode out at the head of the hunting procession with Rothari, and whom the soldiers in the camp greeted with their shouts! He has hurled me down from the triumphal car and disgraced me into being his servant. That was it not, which he vowed to me, as I gave him my heart by the marble fountain. At that time he wished to be a Roman—and now? How long will it last before he requires me to do up my hair in an onion-shaped knot on my head and to drag myself about in the sleeveless dress of his German women, and when I have consented to all this, he will give me a few German fellow-wives, as is the custom of their chieftains, till I finally end my days as an old slave in the house. This would only be the legitimate consequence of his deception. How hypocritically he promised me to live as a Roman and instead of this dragged me up here to a block-house. He starts forth as one of Augustus' generals and returns as one of the chieftains of the

barbarians. He even compelled me to learn their language although it rather resembles the gruntings of animals than the sounds made by man. He drives away my cousins so that I may only have intercourse with his relations Chnodomar and Fraomar and Bitherid." Whilst giving way to these sorrowful reflections she heard her husband's footstep at the door, but she felt utterly incapable of turning round, of rising to greet him. He also had a dark look on his face as he returned to the hall and said in a harsh voice which told of a yet unsuppressed anger: "Thou wilt forbid thy cousins to visit here. They have spoilt my weapons, ridden my horses to death and altogether behaved as if they were masters in my house."

"I must therefore only hold intercourse with savages, dressed as thou art and who are as avacious of their horses and weapons as thou art," retorted Jetta bitterly.

"Thy cousins are scoundrels who know neither love for beast nor man. My horse bears about him all over the traces of their harsh treatment. No stranger shall ride my war-horse, as no man shall kiss my wife. That is a German's idea of honour."

Jetta jumped up angrily, ready to hurl words of defiance at his head. "Impudent scoundrel, am I then a horse?" was on the tip of her tongue, but she restrained herself. "I know not how I may have come down that thou speakest thus to me," she said glowing with passion, but with the self-command imparted to her by her education. "When I became thy wife there was nothing said about turning away my cousins, and of living together with Chnodomar, Fraomar, and Vulflaich. I knew not that it would be part of my business to look after thy horse, and instead of living as a Roman matron, creep within my shell up here in the wood as does some tortoise." Rothari listened furiously to the new tone thus adopted and the veins on his forehead swelled up.

"I do not compel thee to keep thine oath," he said harshly. "Dost thou regret thy sacrifice, then return to thy cousins, thy smooth floors and painted masks of thy villa. You think lightly of your vows, I saw women of rank in Rome, who had been divorced for the seventh time."

Jetta drew herself up and measured him with proud looks. "He who broke his vows on the first day of our marriage, on the second and all

days, was thee and not me. Thou knowest the promises thou madest to me and knowest how thou hast kept them." Her eyes flamed and a passionate contempt sounded in her speech. He however only half turned towards her, and answered calmly: "In wordy scimmages our tongues are not able to vie with your Italian. Ask thyself, if I have kept my faith. I promised to fight for you, thy father can tell thee if I did so. He can also relate to thee thy cousins' heroic deeds," he added with contemptuous irony.

Jetta blushed. She knew but too well that Arator ascribed the victory over the Lentian Alemanni to her husband. "That we have been able to remain at all on this side of the Rhene is owing to thy husband," Arator had said to her, and how proud had she felt at that time on hearing this. The very same pride, however, prevented her from now owning this. To fight for Rome in German costume was certainly more Roman than to turn one's back in the armour of the Scipios to the enemy as Statius and Nasica had done, but the insult, which lay in breaking down all forms, had hurt Jetta more than if Rothari had been wanting in the cause itself. She indeed regretted

her bitter words, but he himself had no word of excuse for doing what so grieved her. Thus she said nothing. He strode silent out into the hall, where he began to repair his weapons with Lupicinus and to re-arrange them. Sad and as if inwardly crushed Jetta remained alone in the hated room. He had not deigned a word as to his successes in the field, not uttered a syllable as to his views concerning the empire or concerning her own great schemes. That she had sent him forth, that he must defeat the Alemanni to become worthy of her never for a moment seemed to enter into his head. He acted as if she in no way formed part in this conjunction of his life. "To the German his wife is not the partner of his plans, but only a domestic animal, and not even the highest of those, the horse is her superior," whispered the evil dæmon within her. She bore him a grudge, nay more, she hated him and from that hour she decided on following her own course. She left to the busy Lupicinus the care of husband and home and lived exclusively for her child and books. Rothari on the other hand spent most of his time in the camp and inspecting the watch-towers. Thus both of them might have gone on

living without quarrelling, had not the child been there about whom they both in their way felt anxious. The child had now attained at the age when tremulously holding on to the benches around the room he could make his first attempts at walking. Rothari, however, one day discovered that the old Phorkyas had hung around his girdle all kinds of charms, and to the inexpressible grief of the women he proceeded to pitch them out of the window. From that time forth he carefully examined all the potions, embrocations, and washes used upon the child, and put a stop more than once to some cure supposed by her to be efficacious. As he saw that Jetta was utterly incapable of discontinuing anything which appeared to her to be judicious, he insisted on the dismissal of old Phorkyas, who taught her mistress all this quack rubbish. "Away with the witch out of my house," he cried. Jetta answered not, but gazed fixedly into space; she said neither yes nor no, but wisely knew how to conceal the old woman, so that Rothari remained uncertain whether his command had been obeyed or not, but remained satisfied as the hated hag no longer crossed his path. Scarcely however had the infuriated German left the Bühl, when the

old woman crept out like a toad from some dark crevice, and began to whisper to Jetta in a subdued voice all kinds of proposals and means to bring about a change in her husband's condition of mind. Jetta had sadly buried her face in her hands. "No, no, I will not hear of a love potion. Shall I, as did Fulvia, render my husband insane? Hast thou forgotten the scenes of woe we have seen in the villa of the roses?" "That was quite another thing," wheezed out Phorkyas. "The empress took colchicum and hemlock, and the slaver of a mad dog . . . I thought at the time that she wanted to kill the centurion, so I did not stop her. Here however are ten innocuous receipts, which I myself will taste previously, so that thou mayest see that thy husband comes to no harm through them."

"Read," said Jetta in a wearied voice.

The old woman took up a roll which lay near her: Receipt of Abu Buthma's to reconcile married couples who hate each other. Should the blame lie with the man, then take the liver of a wolf and the heart of a dove. Kill the dove by a new moon as the sun rises, the wolf an hour before it sets. Take an unused dish, rinse out seven times in flowing water and speak the formulæ of Uriel

and Phaniel. Then set fire to some dry pieces of the juniper tree in which there is no worm, and upon it strew seeds of the love-apple, lay the liver and the wolf's heart and the heart of the dove in such a manner in the dish that they form a triangle, and pour thereon one part of milk from a cow which has only once calved, one part of honey and one part of wine. Upon this throw love apples till the dish is full. Then boil down till the juice can be contained in a small bottle. The rest however hide under a yew-tree, stone-oak, or palm. Give to the raging husband fourteen drops less one, and the heart of the wolf will unite itself once more to that of the dove." "That will not avail," said Jetta, "I am no dove."

"Yet, my little pigeon, we shall try. I will taste all and if it only burns the throat will throw it all away."

Jetta remained silent, and this Phorkyas interpreted into consent. There was no time to be lost as outside Rothari's steps resounded as he returned from the camp. When Jetta woke the next morning at break of day from a restless dream, she heard the melancholy pip of a dove which was being killed behind the house and her heart sank

within her, as if she were taking heavy sins on her conscience. Phorkyas however might prepare love-potions, she was not bound to make Rothari drink them, because she had them in her possession. But how came it that nevertheless the mournful note of the dying dove kept ringing in her ear the whole day? Towards the evening Rothari went down to the camp and Jetta sat down in the hall at the back of the house as she did not care to know what was going on in the yard. She felt sorry for the poor animal with whom she had so often played and sported. But a dark gloom paralyzed her will. It was all the same to her if the wolf killed Phorkyas, or Phorkyas the wolf, most of all would she have preferred herself to die. In the meanwhile the old woman had filled a huge dish with smoking meat and placed it quite close to the wolf's hut. With a joyful whimper the animal sprang towards her, she however wisely remained with her gift out of the reach of its chain. She then marked out with a half peeled hazel stick a circle between herself and the wolf, which she divided into twelve triangles. During this she muttered unintelligible prayers. The wolf ceased its bounds and whimpered. The Abracadabra of

the old woman seemed to impress it. With tail between its legs the animal returned to its hut, for it also was of a superstitious turn. At last Phorkyas' hocuspocus came to an end and she proceeded to her work. "From behind," she thought, "the animal is chained, now the thing is, to make its free feet fast so that it may not spring backwards." She had well considered all this and made due preparations. To the handle of her dish she had fastened a well devised strong loop, then she pushed with a long-handled axe the food towards the animal. The greedy brute had no sooner jumped at the meat than his right foot was caught, and Phorkyas hastened to fasten the end of the noose to the nearest tree. The animal could now spring neither backwards nor forwards; the chain round its neck prevented any forward movement, the cunning loop round its front paw any backward. For a moment the wolf ceased eating and gnawed at the string but soon greed overcame it. After that my meal is over, he thought, there will be yet time enough to free oneself from the noose, which he seemed only to consider as an arrangement to pull the food out of his reach. Men were often guilty of such unlogical treatment as to lay his

food in front of him and then pull it backwards and forwards under his very nose. Nevertheless while feeding became his eye fixed on the old woman. Suddenly the megæra seized her hatchet, her green eye flamed and her sparse locks flew back. Raised to her fullest height she prepared to discharge the murderous blow. At once the beast with an energetic shake of its head cast off the wide collar together with the chain and with one spring hurled the old woman to the ground, so that the hatchet flew out of her hand and struck the kennel a loud blow. It was lucky for the old hag that the wolf had been trained never to touch prey that it had pulled down. It is true it sniffed at her neck, but then full of disgust it shook its head and returned to the meat, whilst Phorkyas leaving the hatchet behind her quitted the field of battle. When Rothari returned soon afterwards he found the wolf without its collar, gnawing at a loop which held fast its forepaw to a tree. Luckily for Phorkyas the animal had effaced with its-paws and tail the old woman's cabbalistic signs. Rothari set the prisoner free and its joyous bounds and obedient behaviour induced him not to replace the collar for that day, as he considered the tamed

beast to be utterly harmless. His question, as to who had so curiously tied up the animal, Jetta answered with the expression of deep injury, to which Rothari was now well accustomed. "I am not here to look after thy horses and thy wolf," she said in a tone in which he distinguished haughty contempt. "Thou could'st take a wife, who understands stable-work better. Moreover I wish for this house a Roman dog and not a tamed wolf," she added spitefully, and he felt that her last words were directed at him.

CHAPTER III.

ROTHARI had found the position of affairs in his house in no way coming up to his expectations, but that was not his only care. Jetta had too related him his brother's sudden arrival and disappearance and the German thought it was his duty to find out his brother. The young man's conduct seemed to him as some suppressed madness produced by the Christians, which he as head of the family was called upon to eradicate. He at last received from his men notice of where Vulfilaich wandered about, and after having been

placed on the track by Lupicinus, the hermit's secret hiding place did not remain long concealed to the skilled eye of the hunter. Following the footprints he reached the cavern so well known to him and numerous traces of fire on the pass, a warm bed of hay and woven mats in the back part of the cave, rich stores of fruit and dried grain plainly showed, that Vulfilaich was not only dwelling in the cave for the time being, but that he had here made a permanent home. But the hermit himself was not to be found either in his roomy rocky chamber, nor in the wood itself.

"Wonderfully has fate fixed my lot among sibyls and prophets," sighed Rothari as he went down to the camp to continue there his inquiries. There however he obtained very disagreeable traces of Vulfilaich's activity. Arator related in answer to his son-in-law's questions that ever and again lately altars and monuments had been thrown down at night, that even in the interior of houses the images of the gods had not been safe from mutilation and that Vulfilaich was accused of this blasphemy. Should ever the heathen soldiers catch him, added the Comes, they would make it hot for him. He himself, he said, had been ordered

by Valentinian to punish with no less severity acts of violence committed by the Christians against the temples, than insults against the cultus of the christians by the worshippers of the ancient gods. "It would be more agreeable to me if he would let himself be hanged somewhere else," concluded the old soldier. "Therefore see how thou mayest get rid of him." After this conversation Rothari had quitted the prætorium out of humour, and had gone towards the slope of Mons Piri to see whether he could not discover on that side of the river the monk whom he sought. Towards mid-day he reached the fountain behind the gate leading to the grotto of Mithras. A dark inkling whispered to him that if Vulfilaich had gone forth to destroy the sanctuaries of the heathen he would above all make for this place. A loud oath escaped his lips as he found his suppositions confirmed. A bold hand had bored a hole in the hidden door and had drawn back the bolt. The door was ajar, admittance to the sanctuary so jealously to be guarded was easy to any person. The German angrily drew his sword and entered the dark passage. The young hermit was in truth guilty of the thing which the worthy Comes Arator had laid to

his charge. After his meeting with Jetta, Vulfaich had determined on never again venturing into the vicinity of the evil spirits, which lay in wait for him. He only left his asylum in the early morning hours to gather berries, roots and herbs, pick out fruit that might have fallen, or to ever decimate fields and trees for his pious work. As soon however as life began in the valley below, he returned to his hiding place, to pray ever from memory all the prayers and psalms which Brother Benedictus had taught him. But all the praying, fasting and castigation could not drive away the wicked enemy and his hosts of hell. "Why do you pursue me," did he often moan, "as I do you no harm?" Or he sighed, "woe be to him who standeth alone, when he falleth, hath he none to raise him." Many a morning did he arise strengthened and of good courage, so that when gathering his berries he sang out his hymns to joyous secular melodies. Later however crouching in the cave, wearied through prayer and fasting, dejectedness set in, perplexity, hatred of himself and his life. His head buzzed and oftentimes claps of thunder sounded in his ear, as if his head would burst. Then the sides of the caves opened,

the dæmons appeared as snakes, lice, crabs, a variegated swarm, or as bulls, wolves and bears roaring and threatening. If he then made the sign of the cross towards them, they changed into men, whistled lewd tunes, whispered such blasphemies into his ear that his ear burnt; shouting, singing and dancing they surrounded him, and beat him nearly to death, so that when he awoke, he felt as if he had been tortured. After such storms then came once again days of silent sad resignation, no good, no evil spirit dared approach. But then inwardly he was dead and withered and sighed for a taste of the blessings of the world above, as he had formerly experienced in the hours of his progressive soul-life, till one day his transportations into that paradise were suddenly changed into these hellish temptations. Mechanically did he repeat his psalms and texts day after day, sought roots and herbs, or wrestled on his knees for revelations from above. Then he pondered again over what work he might do for the world without appearing in the world. For he feared to meet again with those temptations outside which too often had inflamed him to rage, lust and evil thoughts. A lucky accident placed a

young starling one morning in his hands, which numbed by the morning dew let itself be caught. Vulfilaich made a cage for it and a while it was a distraction for him to feed the bird and repeat to it the symbol of the Nicenes, so as to impress it on its memory. As soon as the starling could plainly utter the fundamental tenets of the faith, he intended to set it free in the woods, to bear witness to the soldiers lurking in the forests, who mostly acknowledged Areios. But this prison instruction in the symbolic and dogmatic became burdensome to the starling and as once Vulfilaich incautiously opened the little door, the theological student weary of this overloading made off. This occupation had for a while freed the teacher from the visit of the dæmons and he now thought himself safe. But in the middle of the night a shaking of his limbs announced to him the presence of the wicked one. All round him he heard the whimpering of children, the baaing of sheep, the lowing of cattle, the mourning moan of women, and then again the threatening tread of an armed host. Bathed in sweat he found himself in the midst of an Alemannian battle, by the clear moonlight a chariot drawn by snorting horses charged

at him, but at his agonised cry of "Jesus" it disappeared into the earth. Enticing women, richly loaded tables appeared before him, even by day or whilst he prayed howling wolves or barking foxes dashed past him. Once in his dream he was in the arena at Treviri and saw the gladiators fight. One fell down at his feet with a deep wound in his neck and besought him to bury him. But at last those figures almost always changed into the image of a beauteous fair woman, holding a child to her breast. At times she would bend over him and ask him in gentle words what ailed him, then suddenly she would laugh loudly, sit on his back and encircle his neck between her thighs till he choked. He would fall down and writhe and on awaking his head would be dazed and his limbs sore. These temptations came on night after night and became ever longer, ever worse. Then a grim hatred to the dæmons, who no longer fled at the sign of the cross but mocked it with lewd gesticulations, seized him. He became so weary of the struggle that he determined to fly. But the very female dæmon which he wished to escape from retained him. He feared it, but yet the more did he fear never again to see those

wondrous eyes. And was it also right of him to fly? Better for him to face the struggle and to endeavour on his side to do as much damage to the hosts of the evil one as he could. "Why should there be so many of them in this valley?" he asked himself. He thought to have counted no less than ten thousand in one night. "No wonder, do not their altars, grottoes, chapels which Constantius' Christian zeal had destroyed in Gaul still exist everywhere here. All who were driven from thence have crowded to this valley of the Nicer. Therefore arm thyself, Vulfilaich, fight the battles of thy God." One morning he cut down the handle of his axe so as to conceal it more easily under his cloak of skins, and began to wander about the hills, and when he discovered a shaped or consecrated stone which a hunter might have erected to Diana on account of some lucky day's sport, or some safely returned traveller had dedicated to Mercurius Cimbrius or Neptune as votive offering, or some pious mother had consecrated to the manes of her dead child, down went his axe mercilessly. "Away, you devils," he cried in bitter wrath and he thought to perceive the dæmon retreating among the sparks and the pungent smell of flint.

"I have thee, I have thee," his shrill voice called out in this solitary spot, and then singing his song of triumph and smiling to himself he went on his way swinging his axe. And as a fact, since he thus wandered about, using his arms, pulling down heavy weights, the devils visibly receded from him. He often now enjoyed for several hours a deep refreshing sleep, without that any evil spirit dared approach him. As he was thus engaged on his nightly occupations on the other side of the Nicer, he perceived coming from the eastern gate of the camp a company of brilliantly dressed soldiers treading a path between the houses towards the mountain. Some were clothed in white and wore sacrificial wreaths on their perfumed heads. Quietly did he follow after them and saw them disappear behind a fountain as if the earth had swallowed them up. After a careful examination he discovered a secret door, and on applying his ear to it he distinctly heard the chanting of heathen hymns among the mountains, idolatrous murmurs reached him he distinguished the sound of blows and voices and he determined to force his way in and die as martyr in his struggle against the devil. But in spite of all his efforts he could not open

the door, his fingers bled, his nails were broken. He then lay down in front of the door to await the return of the heathen; as however hour after hour passed by, he at last sprang up and thought of returning some other night with axe and chisel and to thoroughly lay bare this house of Satan. But the gates of hell resisted even another attack. Weeping with rage the young monk lay down before the heavy door which defied all his efforts. Then was it revealed to him that he should day after day bore away at the wood with a sharp iron till he could insert his arm through an opening and push back the strong bolt from inside. Now he had work for many nights to come. So soon as all was quiet in the valley and no disturbance was to be feared, he sat down before the mysterious gate and bored and chiselled till the sweat ran down his brow. Even then the wicked enemy played him many a trick. A wicked dæmon drove the iron to one side so that it cut deep into the ball of Vulfilaich's left hand and caused him to leave off his work for several days. The ruler of the winds angrily hurled storm-showers against the door and with icy hail struck the hot neck of God's servant so that he fell ill and the next

morning was unable to move a limb. But the monk's zeal overcame all Satan's wiles, and so soon as he could make use of his limbs he stole across in the hot mid-day hours to complete his work in this seldom trodden spot. Who can describe his triumph, when the opening became large enough for him to pass his arm through, when the bolt shot back and the door opened. He uttered a fervent prayer and crept down the passage. He had but to wind his way for a few steps by a dim light between narrow walls, then the cave turned and became wider, it turned again and out of the narrow passage the youth gazed into a temple lighted from above, finding himself with joyful shudder axe in hand facing the huge decorated wall. Now was he indeed in the grotto of Mithras, in the sanctuary of the God, whom his church most hated and which was the last to succumb. Before him rose two columns, arising from a wide basis. Grapes and birds artistically imitated adorned their base, whilst horrible to behold the capitals represented four human heads. To the right and left were two altars, bronze and earthen lamps stood on the cornices. The principal wall immediately facing was taken up by a

huge relief, representing a youth wearing a Phrygian cap hurling a bull to the ground. Horribly did the left hand of the youth dig into the nostrils of the beast forcing the head upwards, whilst the right hand drove the sacrificial knife into his throat. Nevertheless an expression of deep pity lay on the sad face of the young celebrant. A dog was springing at the bull to eagerly lick the blood, whilst a scorpion gnawed at the attributes of fecundity. With horror Vulfilaich saw on the base a bronze serpent curled, drinking out of a water vessel. To the right was depicted a boy with raised, to the left one with sunken torch, and on both sides as well as on the upper cornice Vulfilaich counted twelve small pictures with representations which he could not make out. That the serpent was the old serpent, Satan, to whom the heathen prayed, was a matter of course. To him this bull was sacrificed as burnt-offering. "Go not after the light of the fire," recited the monk, "thou seest it quite close and it is far; rather go after the voice of the water. . . A false worship is here honoured. I will not the number of your offerings, saith the Lord!" he cried out so that it echoed thunderingly through the empty passages.

of the grotto. He himself was startled at the mighty echo, but all the more angrily therefore did he raise his axe, so as to first break to pieces the beauteous sad face of the celebrating youth, more especially as its pure expression moved him. But against his will did he lower his weapon. It seemed to him as if the strange man looked at him and asked, what have I done to thee that thou smitest me? That done by the youth to the bull was terrible, but he himself felt sorrow thereat, that was plain to read on his noble face. A deep sympathy seized Vulfilaich's heart, that this beauteous youth should be eternally damned and should suffer through all eternity in the fiery pool, which burneth with everlasting sulphur. He would also have gladly known what indeed the imagery meant. But at once he heard the voice of the spirit saying in his ear: "I have sent thee to bear witness against this idolatrous image, and not to bend the knees of thy heart before it." And again he prepared to deal the murderous blow. But a more powerful hand from behind wrested the upraised axe from his grasp. As if caught in some wicked deed, Vulfilaich started back. He looked round and before him stood Rothari, his brother.

"What has the god of light done to thee that thou trespasses against him?" asked Rothari in a severe tone. Vulfilaich had to recover himself, he had been so terrified by the sudden surprise. Though was he not in the right? Had not the spirit itself urged him on? His courage returned at once and he said: "You worship here the sacrifice of a bull, as if it could avail; you depict the bloody priests of Baal with faces of angels to lead the weak astray; you adore the old serpent of Satan, instead of crushing its head. Give me my axe, that I may make an end to the abomination."

"Thou thinkest therefore that the sacrifice of a bull and the serpent of Paradise, about which your priests relate, is here portrayed?"

"What else?" asked Vulfilaich, but his enforced composure disappeared, the moment that he felt no longer certain of his knowledge.

"Foolish boy," said Rothari in a tone of reproof, in which Vulfilaich distinguished a certain amount of contempt. "It is certainly easier to destroy sacred stones than to understand them. It is forbidden to betray the mysteries of the god to the uninitiated, but the image refers to none of those things of which thou dreamest. It represents

the god of light, the invincible one, making the nature-year subject to himself. Full of pity he slays the old year, so that the new may begin. Ears of corn shoot from the tail of the animal because with the nature-year plants come and go. The dog that licks its blood, is the flowing heat of Sirius, and the fierce autumn storm, when the sun enters into the sign of the scorpion, are the enemies of its fecundity. The serpent betokens the gladdening showers which refresh the parched earth, and Phosphorus with the raised, Hesperus with the sunken torch recall to mind the rising and sinking light of days increasing and decreasing. First learn to understand the rich context and deep meaning of this tablet, O ignorant monk, before that thou sinnest with blaspheming hand against it."

"Wise as may sound your explanation of the idols," said Vulfilaich obdurately, "you nevertheless give not the glory to the Lord of All, and practise dark abominations."

"It is of the Lord of All who calls out the seasons in due time and bestows life, that this image reminds us, and namest thou abominations the oath of virtue which we here take? What

knowest thou, effeminate boy, of the trials of endurance which men submit to in this place? Climb up this passage on slippery boards, on perpendicular ladders, through pools, ditches and fire, and thy blood will grow cold at the proofs of faith, which men here undergo. But thine unholy eye durst not behold these things and wert thou not my father's child, thou wouldest not quit alive this room, in which thou hast dared to venture. The brother and the sick man will I spare. Vulfilaich, what hast thou done with Vadomar's best loved son, to what hast thou come? Is that the life of a man which thou ledest? Thou liest like the beasts of the forest in a cave, thou prapest, whimperest to the God, who has turned thee from a man into a fool. When I first saw thee I was horrified, but to-day I could weep over thee, so much has the madness which thou callest faith, wasted thee. Forth out of thy cave, go forth among men, or thou art lost!"

The monk turned pale; then he said in a beseeching voice: "Oh, say not that, son of my father! Thou knowest not the voice which calls to me by night and by day, not the hellish tempter, who everywhere, at labour, or at rest, yea

even in thy house, pursues me. If I do as thou commandest, then am I indeed lost."

The tone in which Vulfilaich spoke was so much the expression of a tortured heart, that Rothari shook his head pityingly and continued in a milder tone, "I will not rob thee of thy faith, but nevertheless I have also known Christians, who make use of the world, who take life as it is, and struggle and labour instead of creeping like a toad into cracks and crevices."

"You are strong and I am weak," answered Vulfilaich. "I fly temptations which are stronger than I. I had dedicated my services to Ithacius and to the other bishops. But what did I find in that confederacy which they call a church? Vanity of vanities! I saw that even among the servants of the cross, who assert that they have renounced the world, those who do not believe are more in number than those who do. I asked the priests and bishops for advice, but their advice was earthly and not heavenly. I disclosed my sanctuary to my companions and they fumbled at it with unclean hands. I then fled from them. I fled to Father Benedictus who had converted me, but I found him on his death-bed. 'My son,' said

he, 'here below thou hast thy pilgrimage not in Jerusalem but in Jericho. Descending from the heavenly Jerusalem down to the earthly Jericho thy soul fell among murderers, they fell upon it and smote it and went forth leaving it half-dead. The church, whom thou seekest, is the city which is above, but in that the celestial Jerusalem came down, it deteriorated according to the law of terrestrial force. In this city wilt thou find stones, which will become as an offence to thee, potshard which will injure thee, and plenty of dirt in its streets. If thou art not strong enough to overcome all this, then fly into solitude. It is better to house together with beasts than with sin!' Thus spake the good man and died. After that I had closed the eyes which once had looked so lovingly on me, I asked myself, 'whither, Vulfilaich? Back to men or alone into solitude?' On the day that Benedictus was buried the whole of the clergy of the land was present and they invited me with hypocritical words to return to their service. But I felt that among those who called themselves saints, the life which God had begun in me would perish through the breath of hypocrisy, lust and pride which they exhaled. God did not make me

strong enough to cast down sinners, as He did the mighty Bishop Ambrosius or Martinus, He ordered me to fly. 'Go forth from them,' said a voice in mine ear. I followed the counsel of the dying Benedictus. I lived as another kind of being. Men had to mock me, persecute and ill-treat me, so that my soul might be compelled to fly unto him with whom alone is peace."

Rothari shook his head pityingly. "If thou dost not feel at ease among men," he said, "if thou art neither a man of the sword nor of counsel, become a philosopher. Read the books which wise men have written, live in thy cell to learn and to teach. Seek out what former generations have thought of God and the world."

"That also have I attempted," said Vulfilaich sadly. "I have sat over your books the whole winter, as I concealed myself at Borbetomagus in the school of the Bishop, till the derision of the younger clerics drove me forth. They gave me there also philosophic works. But of what use was this wisdom to me? If I glowed with fever, then it said, thou should'st be healthy; it ordered me to be strong when I felt to be weak, and when my blood boiled with sinful lust, it

spake of virtue. He who first put the flagellum in my hand wherewith to subdue the lust of my flesh, was the only philosopher who understood my nature."

"If thou trainest thyself, as animals are trained," said Rothari harshly, "thou wilt become more and more like the animals, with whom thou now findest thyself best at thine ease in thy cave."

"No, Rothari, no," cried Vulfilaich. "Oh, if thou hadst only once tasted this heavenly bliss," he said mysteriously and his eyes sparkled, "thou wouldest not speak thus. They who sit in caves, see not the light of the sun or the face of man, which animals also see, but the faces of angels who look upon God. With face bent down they plainly hear voices, as salutary as they are secret. What says the spirit? Man is like a lyre and I pass over him like a plektron. Man sleeps and I wake. Behold it is the Lord who sets the soul of man outside of him." The young man ceased speaking and an expression of silent ecstasy lay upon his face.

Rothari laughed and said roughly: "And what is the use of all this?"

"My prayer is of use to the world, with it I dispel devils," said Vulfilaich sadly.

"Is there one evil spirit the less since thou dwellest here? Do not fevers and plagues creep along the low ground about the river as formerly, did not the hail knock off yesterday as spitefully as ever the buds and fruits from the trees, does not passion rage in the world against passion more than ever? Do thou give up the struggle against the evil powers which lurk under the green sod. Thy holy wake does not drive those away who drink the moonshine, thy prayers avail not against spirits which have no ears to hear thy exorcising. Seek to begin something else, young fool, of which my eyes can see an advantage for the kingdom and mankind."

Again Vulfilaich wished to gainsay, but Rothari made an imperious motion with his hand and said, "I am the eldest of the race. Thy God has also placed me over thee and I order thee to leave aside this idle frenzy." The seriousness with which the huge warrior addressed him did not fail to impress the monk. "Speak," said he in a low tone. "What shall I do? If it be not against the Lord whom I serve, I shall gladly obey."

“At last a reasonable word, thou wretched boy! Though what use can one make of thee as thou thus standest before me.” Sadly did Rothari inspect the miserable appearance of the young repentant, till the latter’s cheeks glowed with anger. After some consideration the elder brother then said flatly and briefly, “Thou must away from here. Thy love of temple-desecrating is known all over the camp and if the soldiers catch thee thou wilt be marched off to the cross or to the wood-pile. Go to Rando to the hot springs of Macrian. Tell him that I accept his proposals about the helmet, and bring me the valuable trophy here. Wrinkle not thy forehead, it is not a matter of mere vanity as thou immediately thinkest. I will appease the Augustus by this gift, and what is more draw thereby the sting out of a wound which otherwise will never heal up. That he lost his helmet at Solicinium, the gold helmet, which was a rallying signal in every battle, that he lost it in the sight of his own cavalry, tortures the proud man by night and by day, and he thinks that at the least ten battles must he win against the hateful robbers, to wash out this insult and cause it to be forgotten. Should, however, the

Alemanni return the trophy of their own accord, then will he have no further to seek it with mad inroads, then have we peace and there is in this world one less cause for shedding blood. Dost thou understand, boy, that this is an important mission, which does thee honour?"

"I am sent to make peace," said Vulfilaich earnestly. "I will do as thou sayest, so that the blood of Abel may not anew bear witness against Cain. If the Lord has chosen me to put an end to murder I take his orders from thy mouth."

"Explain to thyself as thou wishest, but do as I say," replied Rothari severely. "Escape over the mountains to Vicus Nedensis, there art thou safe. Rando knows my conditions and accepts them. Bring then thy gift well concealed and as secretly as thou mayest unto my house on the Bühl, so that thy dangerous property may not become thy ruin. When thou hast done this, thou hast done a work that I praise, and then perhaps another task may be found suited to the son of Vadomar and not opposed to thy garb. But now come out of this grotto which thou should'st never have entered." Ashamed Vulfilaich followed after his elder brother. Outside the mid-

day sun poured down upon the slope on which they issued forth between the high black-berry bushes and blossoming white thorn. On reaching a woodland path Rothari gave back the axe to the monk with a grave look, at the same time holding out his hand for farewell. Vulfilaich bent over it and two hot tears fell on the hard hand which he tremblingly grasped. Rothari moved looked after the youth as he disappeared in the depths of the forest of oaks. "If he feels so deeply the disgrace of his position," he thought, "he may yet be saved."

CHAPTER IV.

HAD Rothari exhibited the same mildness towards his wife which he showed to Vulfilaich all might have turned out well, but in this very case consanguinity proved powerful, thus the German could make allowance for the kindred nature of his brother even in all its abasement, whilst the Roman views of his wife infuriated him, so soon as she wished anything in the slightest manner opposed to his will. It had now become thoroughly

evident to him that such a proud and determined woman as Jetta could never render him happy. The strong brave man longed for a wife whom he might protect, a wife who called for and needed support. He wished also to honour and adore her, but she should not demand this as her right as did Jetta. She might be a goddess, but not a goddess who spake oracularly, but powerful through her sweetness of disposition and who quietly like the penates brought joy into the house. Jetta was quite the contradiction to all this. Her presence weighed him down, as he never was allowed to forget it for one instant. Dull and ill-tempered when in the house he now spent the greater part of the day with Arator in the camp, Jetta however sat together with Phorkyas and goaded on by the old woman, grew more and more embittered with her fate. Accustomed to applause and admiration she felt herself in her new condition of a chided wife, whom her husband does not appreciate, as if inwardly annihilated. Her strength had only depended on enthusiasm, which glowed like a flame through her whole being. She named this sacred flame love for Rome, but she comprehended in this appellation everything great to which her

enthusiastic woman - nature clung: religion and poetry, music and Plato, roses and marble, love and courage, philosophy and kaballah. Her garden with its evergreen vegetation belonged as much to this "Rome," as did her statues and mystical magic rolls. For this Rome of her phantasy had she combated with all her soul, with all the enthusiasm of her poetic mind. The Roman manner of living was Rome to her woman's eye and the barbaric practices around her was the end of all that she loved. Her husband had nothing but a cross word for anything relating to her ideal, and among all the barbarians who surrounded her there was none to whom she could turn. Thus the beauteous flame within her burnt more and more dully and ashes and dust smothered its sacred glow. It is impossible to be a priestess any longer, where no faith exists. The spirit began to weaken within her. Even when she wished to bury herself in her sacred rolls she understood them no more, and the choicest bits in Plato found her cold. When she thought of the proud aspirations of her bridal night, how she had dreamt that this man would raise her even to the pearl diadem, she laughed out of bitter spite. "The

gold helmet of the imperator would find no place on the rolled-up hair of the German. He will lower me down even to being the shrew of the barbarians, and who knows how much lower." Thus she sat in melancholy broodings, robbed of all joys, of all hopes in life, and pondered over how she could free herself from this existence, but nowhere did she see an escape. When enthusiasm no longer exists, mind is but a misfortune, for it then only digs out, that everything is a mere nothing. This the poor prophetess on the Bühl experienced. Her lofty plans of past days now seemed empty and childish, but she had been happy as she then so foolishly raved, and now that her eyes were open was she miserable.

The change which had taken place in his daughter did not escape Arator's sharp eyes, but Jetta angrily refused any answers to his questions concerning her grief, and Rothari never spoke with him about his wife. At times Statius still sneaked up to the Bühl when he knew Rothari to be absent. When once Nasica asked him, how he had found Jetta, the fat man replied mockingly, "She resembles the Pythia sitting on the cold tripod and vainly waiting for the god to illumine her." The

imagery was spiteful, but indicated Jetta's condition. — Yet another of those long and dreary days for the inimical couple in the blockhouse had passed over. Rothari had become suspicious that Phorkyas still haunted his house and brooded over as to how he could ascertain the truth of the matter. Jetta however wore the Niobe look which he hated and but curt answers were to be extracted from her tightly drawn lips. She had heard that Gratian had now returned to the camp and was inwardly considering whether she should not confide in him. He would be certain to acknowledge the justice of her complaints and prevail upon Rothari to give way to her wishes. Out of humour and silent sat the husband and wife in the room lighted by the flickering uncertain glow of the fire in the hearth. As Jetta persisted in her defiant attitude, Rothari stepped up to the fire and stirred up the flame. He needed work to obtain the mastery over his temper. Thus he threw some iron staves into the glowing flame and began to hammer on his anvil till Jetta left the room to escape the din. Clearly lighted up by the flame the warrior stood by the fire with upraised hammer.

Kling, klang! fell the blows in the glowing

mass. "Thus would I strike the traitors who drove me from my home"—klang, klang! "thus ought I to be burnt with a red iron for having become a Roman," klang, klang; "thus should Phorkyas double up under my blows for having estranged my wife." Suddenly the knightly smith staggered back through severe pain. An arrow stuck in his arm. It came from the open door through which Jetta had just disappeared. Through the noise of his hammering the warrior had heard no sound, his eye was dazzled by the flame, and he saw all black in the background of the hall. Quickly he plucked the arrow out of the wound. It was the same workmanship, which he already knew from the attack in the wood. The shaft strongly turned, the point small but sharp and fixed in with copper, the barb a heron's feather. His first thought was to pursue the assassin, and smite him down with the glowing iron which he held in his hand and out of which he had intended to weld a sword. Suddenly the suspicion shot through his excited brain, "how if thine own wife had sped this arrow against thee?" The thought lamed his every movement. But instantly his presence of mind returned. An itching of the wound, the rapid swelling of the whole arm

recalled Gratian's former warning to his mind, that these arrows were poisoned. Hundreds of scars compared to which this was but a scratch did he bear on his huge body, but none had pained like this. With quick determination did he seize the glowing iron which yet lay in the fire, and burnt a deep wound in the place in which the point had entered. Then gnashing his teeth with pain, he picked the malignant weapon up from the floor and staggered to his room. An hour afterwards when Jetta entered she found her husband in a wild delirium. Quickly did she fetch a lamp. Unconscious, but with dilated eyes and a deep wound in his arm did she see her husband and near to him on the ground an arrow resembling that aimed at him on the day of the hunt. All her anger vanished in her terror and horror. She would have called Phorkyas, but the old woman had disappeared. "Water, water," stammered the wounded man as Jetta returned. She held the jar to his lips, he drank with feverish craving and became calmer. He would not let her touch the wound, it seemed to her at times as if he feared or despised her. Towards morning he fell into a deep sleep, and she stopped outside the house to breathe

the fresh air. Doing this she ran against Phorkyas who had come to listen. Had Jetta's thoughts not been so distracted she would have remarked that Phorkyas was astonished at nothing except that her husband was not dead. Even that the old woman had some balm for wounds which she offered to her, did not arouse a suspicion in the wife bewildered by fright and dismay. "Pour some of this on a linen and bind it round his arm," said the hag. Jetta mechanically took the phial which contained a brownish liquid. Then she returned to the bedside of the wounded man who looked at her with open glassy eyes. She tore a piece of linen from a garment and laid it on the couch, she was about to soak another bit with the brown balsam, when the glass was sent flying out of her hand, breaking against one of the beams of the ceiling. The sick man had raised himself. "Poisoner," he hissed from between his pale dry lips.

"It is a balm for thy wounds, Rothari," said Jetta gently in a tearful voice.

"From Phorkyas, is it not, that excellent markswoman?"

"Thou can'st not think?" . . .

"She and no other, or you both," he said harshly and turned his face to the wall, tortured by the burn and the poison in his veins. Mutely did Jetta stand for a while near the couch, then she quietly sat down on a chest on a level with his head. All expression of pride and defiance had left her beauteous pale face. Deep sadness at the disappointment of a life-time lay stamped on her features and a prayer trembled on her lips. "I will offer on the altar of Sirona erected by Fulvia near the Rosenhof the first fruits of my garden, if she helps me to overcome this insult." After a while the sick man called for more water, then linen. Reluctantly did he suffer Jetta to bind up the wound. Then he again fell asleep, and on waking up his gigantic strength had shaken off the effects of the poison. But an excitable, wicked bent remained behind. All that his wife did, annoyed him. Once that Jetta felt that his life was safe, her usual simple dignity returned. The queenly bearing so natural to her irritated him, instead of delighting him as formerly. Even the creaking of her sandals became unbearable. She did nothing quick enough to please him, and he imagined that her affected majesty hindered the rapidity of her

movements. This dignified behaviour might do when playing the part of guardian angel in the soldiers' huts, but what is the meaning of nursing one's own husband as a wife should, the fair magician does not seem to have the slightest impression, thus murmured to himself the wounded man.

"Any peasant wench of my people," he thought to himself, "would look after me better." As a fact the aristocratic Roman woman was not cut out for the post. If she had to bind up the wound, she did it so awkwardly that in his anger he tore the bands out of her hand. Perseveringly she sat at his side and handed him whatever he called for. But at one time the cloth was too damp, at another too dry. She offered him in the first instance what ought to be given last, and had never to hand, what he wished for. When finally with all her regal bearing she let the bandages fall to the ground so that they were covered with dust, he angrily ordered her away and called for Lupicinus.

Now at last her patience came to an end. She went outside the house and left her fractious husband to the porter's care. Again deep grief came over her and involuntarily she thought how

low she had sunken, she who once was called the queen of the valley. A barbarian treated her like a mere maid-servant and she plainly saw that he would humble her all the more, the more that she bowed down before him. That his reproaches might contain a grain of truth, did she not feel. Since his return to her in the garb of a savage, she found in the word "barbarian" a sufficient explanation for all their disagreements.

But still more gloomy were the thoughts which crowded in Rothari's mind as he lay on his sick bed. In all that he had undergone he saw the punishment for his desertion of his people. "I am no Roman, who bade me serve under the eagle? I am no prophet, who bade me woo a sibyl?" and a feeling of contempt came over him as he thought of Jetta's magic arts. "Verily the wise women of my people, the foretellers of the future, the blood-conjurers, the exorcists of the dead, the prophetesses, they know how to bind wounds and heal the sick." The adage since ran in his ear which his old nurse had spoken over his barked shins. "Skin to skin, blood to blood, leg to leg, and limb fix thyself to limb." And had not this blessing cured him? On the contrary these daughters

of Hecate could only inflict wounds, but wounds they could not heal.

After a while Jetta returned, she arranged everything in the hall beneath, as she fancied might be pleasing to him, but her loud voice, the noise with which she did everything annoyed him. "Beware of whispering men and loud-voiced women," had a wise Alemann once said to him. He had followed the first part of this advice but not the second. Now that he required rest and quiet nursing, it was insufferable to always find this Roman woman acting a part. How he hated the excitable Italian nature, the loud voices, the fuss about nothing, the laughing and chatter of the cousins who daily inquired about his health. His intimidated wife was ever hiding and concealing something from him, at one time a message to Phorkyas, at another her cabbalistic rolls, or a visit from some of those women he hated or her would-be lovers. Hourly repelled her heart again closed up against him. She considered his displeasure out of all proportion to the misadventure which had happened, and looked upon his inforced rest as the laziness of the German bruin, who at home takes out his winter-sleep and only lives when

at war or in the hunting ground. Thus the sick-bed had not brought husband and wife nearer to one another. Her expression looked dark as thunder at many a harsh word spoken by the barbarian, he grew hard as the nether mill-stone. In one of those unhappy moods he tossed impatiently about one evening on his couch and heard that Jetta was receiving a visit. The Augusta herself had appeared in person, accompanied by a suite of women among whom he recognised from their voices Fulvia and Bissula. This visit angered him, for he doubted Justina's interest, and the noise was disagreeable to him. First all details about his wound were discussed, the mysteries attached to this second attempt with the selfsame means. With mocking laughter did he hear the wise advice which these aristocratic ladies gave to Jetta as to the treatment of his wound. Then Justina desired to see the child. Bissula went to fetch it. But how was this? The nurse who brought in the child was Phorkyas in person! So the old witch was still in his house looking after his child. He thought of jumping up and driving her away, but remembered that it was the empress in person who was now condescending to address this murderess. He must

restrain himself. But what a consultation of the women now took place concerning the health of his pale heir! The one advised that the child should be soused all over with cold water every three hours, the other would have it completely wrapped up in wool another found it of extraordinary advantage to mix wine with all his food, the other recommended pepper, salt, and eggs. Oh, if he could but have strangled them all with his own hands, he would willingly have died after seeing them hanging like so many thrushes to a line. And now Jetta began to relate in her deep voice all that she had attempted and gone through with the child. "Her organ never sounds more full of feeling," he ground out, "than when she holds forth on her fanatic madness." The sick man trembled with rage, so that the table near his couch shook.

"The boy must away," he said, "away to my friends that they may make a warrior of him. Even if in their ruthless madness they do not murder him, what sort of man would he turn out here? Such a sweet chattering ape as Jetta's cousins. No, Vadomar's grandson shall become a warrior like his ancestors, this grant Wodan, Donar and Ziu!"

The next morning Rothari awoke fresh and happy. His anger had instilled new life into him so that his old elasticity returned. He ordered Lupicinus to bandage tightly the wound in his arm and then arose. He sat down in the arbour that ran along the west side of the house and breathed in the fragrant morning air, whilst Jetta led the small boy up and down in the sun. The fresh air did him good. After a few days he had recovered so far as to be able to accept an invitation to the camp, where important transactions were about to take place. King Macrian had appeared in person with a mounted suite and demanded from the Augustus that the works on Mons Piri should be left off. Rothari was absent the whole day and Jetta impatiently awaited his return. She feared a fresh war before that her husband was completely cured. But she also feared that the court would give in and quit the mountains. Much of the splendour had disappeared with which Jetta had adorned Julian's and Valentinian's conquest. The enthusiasm, the source of her power, had died out, since this land had become the scene of all her sorrows. But nevertheless she was attached to the valley and a portion of her life

would have fallen away from her had she been compelled to leave it. It was as sacred to her as a reliquary of the belief of her childhood and the ideal of her best days. Rothari also appeared to her at this moment in all his military glory, when the question arose of avoiding a disgrace for the party with which he had thrown in his lot. She felt almost as if after his convalescence she would gladly welcome a war, for then he and she would be on the same side once more and a new feeling joining them together. She would speak in this wise to Rothari on his return. Full of expectation she sat under the shade of the arbour, till finally steps outside might be heard. Rothari however was not alone. A gigantic Ale-mann wearing a boar's-skin around his shoulders strode by his side and Jetta was astonished to see that her husband addressed this bearded uncouth barbarian with as much respect as if he were Valentinian himself. "My king," he thus addressed him, so that Jetta listened intently. Concealed by the shade of the arbour she remained unseen by the two men, whilst she could hear every word. They spoke of the castellum. In vain Rothari sought to convince Macrian, who looked at him

with a smile of derision, that a Roman castellum on the mountain could not be of more danger to the Alemanni than a standing camp on the Nicer, or the fortifications of Lupodunum and Alta Ripa. "We have surrendered to the Augustus the land on both sides of the Nicer even to the mountains. He expressly promised not to fortify the mountains. In spite of this however he has built watch-towers, and as we said nothing, a bulwark is to be built up above from which he can at any moment invade our valley. At our last council it was determined not to permit this, although the sons of many nobles are still held by the Romans as hostages. Only our regard for these tied our hands, but now the people is impatient. It granted to its nobility a last effort to free its sons. I succeeded as thou knowest, but therefore are the other youths more sharply guarded. To-morrow I return to my people, and if Valentinian does not send a more favourable message than he seemed inclined to do to-day, you have war."

Rothari remained silent, for he had no arguments to oppose to the words of the king. His people was right and Rome was faithless. But as Macrian was about to quit him, Rothari retained

him. "I have yet another prayer, my king," he modestly said, "which concerns me in person." Jetta listened attentively. "I have a boy," said in an embarrassed manner her husband, then he hesitated and looked towards the harbour as if something had moved inside. But as all remained quiet, he continued. "The child is being pampered here. Exaggerated love and female superstition have poisoned it. I wish my son to become a warrior. My prayer to thee is this, to take the boy to thy halls and put him in charge of one of the nobles of thy suite to give up to my relations, so that it may grow up as other boys of our blood. Rando's wife or Fraomar's sisters will not refuse this request of their relative."

"And thy wife?" inquired Macrian, "does she consent to send her child into the land of the enemy?"

"She would be against it did she know it," replied Rothari. "When she however after some time sees the child flourishing and healthy, the heart in her bosom would not be that of a mother, did she not bless the injury which I do her this day."

"The child belongs to the father," said Macrian, "and I am in thy debt. Old Bitherid may

trail along the child as best he can. We stop for the night at Tegulæ, as we do not believe in Valentinian's hospitality. Thither bring the child in the morning, for we must ride soon after mid-day. See that the mother soothes the child, for we are but poor wet-nurses."

"Unfortunately Jetta is only to know of this when the child is away," said Rothari. "But swear to me one thing, king Macrian, that thou dost not hold the child as hostage, in case war begins."

"If I meet thee on the field of battle," answered the king impressively, "I shall slay thee or thou me, thy child however shall be to me as mine own son."

"I thank thee, king of my people," said Rothari and Jetta heard them join hands. They then both left the court and strode off towards the woods.

Quickly did Jetta jump up. Like a lioness whose young is in danger did she rush to the room in which slept her child. She would take it and flee away. But Rothari would soon discover this and pursue her. She must wait till her treacherous husband slept. Dressed as she was she lay down on her couch and drew the blanket

around her. She lay thus with her arm stretched across the child as Rothari entered the room. He saw well that she slept not, but often did she thus show displeasure. He himself lay down. Her continued defiance rendered his severity all the easier to him. All the less did he require to explain matters to her, if she refused to speak to him. He fell asleep. So soon as his breath became regular, Jetta quietly arose and disappeared. For a long time she returned not. Once Rothari heard the child weep, but as it grew quiet again, he turned over and continued his slumbers. The dawn was already at hand when Jetta returned. She took the child and carried it out. Silently did she descend the steps and crossing the court reached the gate. The astonished wolf jumped up and whimpered, at seeing his mistress at such an hour on the nightly road, but at her order he obediently lay down again in his kennel. Phorkyas stood at the gate, she carefully took the sleeping child from Jetta. "The mulet waits already on the bridge," she said. "Before the tyrant awakes are we already half way to Alta Ripa. But thou should'st have given him the water of oblivion, as I told thee."

"Silence, I will not listen to this."

"Good, but act cautiously as I taught thee. For three days at least will it hinder him from pursuit, and by that time are we all concealed."

"But thou answerest to me with thine own eyes, that it will not injure him," said Jetta tremblingly.

"Yea, verily, he ever remains the apple of thine eye, the wretch," hissed the witch. "But thou knowest that I never lie when I swear as I swore. He will receive no injury however much he may deserve it. In three days he will be as before."

Thus they separated and the cocks crew.

Rothari lay within still wrapped in sleep. He heard indeed Jetta's voice murmuring incantations, but a heavy weariness still dulled all his sensations. He felt, though his eyes were closed, that Jetta stood before him and that her soft hand was nearing his face. When he opened his eyes, he saw her earnest beautiful countenance bent over him with an expression of tender anxiety, whilst over him she held a cup and before that he could raise his hand to protect himself, she had poured a few drops into each eye. As he shook himself to-

gether, a stream of fire seemed to pour down over him. He sprang up, but it seemed to him as if he moved in a sea of light. Then this became darker. White streams as if of milk encompassed him, then came darkness and only a weak sense of light showed him the position of the small window. He then heard Jetta's voice from near the door. "Thou wilt see again, Rothari, so soon as I and my child are in safety. It is thy fault that such measures became necessary between us." Frantically did he spring in the direction of the voice, but stumbled and fell over his own couch. He heard then that she still waited a moment as if to make certain that he had not injured himself. Then the sound of her steps from below died away. He finally found his way by groping to the stairs. But the light in the hall hurt him; he washed his eyes with water, but now complete darkness fell around him. He then full of bitterness sat down near the hearth, and with thoughts of revenge against this daughter of Hel, trying to discover through which of the black arts she had discovered his secret and whether she would keep her word and return his sight to him, so soon as she had concealed the child.

Whilst he thus sat there deeply buried in his grief he felt a cold damp touch on his hand and then the licking of a tongue. The wolf had crept up to him to comfort him. Deeply affected Rothari passed his hand over the animal's thick fur as a caress. The wolf whimpered in low melancholy notes as if he understood the miserable condition of his master. "Thou faithful beast," said Rothari sadly, "thou art called deceitful and cruel. I should like to know which of you has the heart of a wolf, thou or she." But even in this dark hour of hatred the bright image of her beauty and of all her charms rose up before him, and when he, to distract his thoughts, tried to picture the most brilliant recollections of his chequered life, he ever came back to her with whom all his joy had begun and ended. The fevered injured eye only ever showed him the portrait of that Jetta in the garden who once in all her lovely majesty came forth to meet him with dark flashing eyes, and he still saw the nimbus around her head, as he had seen it at that time. He could not likewise forget the expression of tender solicitude with which she had bent over him as she performed her dark deed. She certainly loved

him, she could have injured him in a much worse manner. "I shall not punish her," he said. "The child must away, I will find it, even if she has hidden him among the elves and pigmies on Mons Valentiniani; then shall I bring it to where a man can be made of him, and not an ape. Her punishment must be to know that all her art cannot avail against Rothari's will."

When the men returned from their work, Lupicinus who entered the room found his master near the hearth. He sat there with eyes fixed, the black pupils widely dilated as those of an owl and like it sensitive to all light. Shortly did he state that he was again ill, caused milk and bread to be given to him and remained quietly seated in his corner, though he ordered that one of the men should remain with him. He sent the faithful Lupicinus to Tegulæ to inform Macrian, that the child came not.

"Another could have taken the message," thought Lupicinus, who did not look forward to another meeting with the terrible king behind whom the ravens flew. But out of pity for Rothari's condition he avoided any contradiction and hastened to Tegulæ, the first village that lay on the banks

of the Nicer up the valley. "Who knows whether he will recognise thee," he said as a consolation, "and even if he does, he will never assault Rothari's messenger." This hope deceived him not. He found the king in the most jovial mood seated with his men around a cask of barley-brew. Lupicinus delivered his message in a firm voice. "Again one of those who played at master, when the wife was not at home," cried the king, cracking his rough joke at which his warriors laughed. "Give him the messenger's reward," cried Macrian and the youngest brought a drinking-horn which Lupicinus emptied at a draught. Then Macrian recognised the sentry on Mons Valentiniani. "Hallo," he cried, "thou art recovered from thy auerhahn hunt? Now I recognise the flaxen pate. I am glad. But I did not hit my hardest. I felt pity for that young head. Though if ever thou mountest guard again, my child, stick to thy spear and let the birds do their own courting."

CHAPTER V.

THE day after her flight Jetta sat securely concealed in the palace at Alta Ripa. Valentinian

had listened to her account of the reasons why she had left her husband with as much kindly feeling as his morose disposition permitted; then he had determined that he would not suffer Rothari to deliver up his son to the Alemannian king as hostage. On the contrary he would now retain in the palace, where Jetta was as ever a welcome guest, the boy as hostage against Rothari's dubious allegiance. This seemed right to Jetta as being the safest method of securing her safety. Rothari could no longer demand the child from her, but now from the Augustus. Another weight rolled off from Jetta's heart as a messenger whom she had secretly sent to the Bühl came back with the news that Rothari's blindness was decreasing. He was already able to move about the darkened hall without knocking up against the articles in the room, and in a few days he would undoubtedly be quite recovered. Thus Phorkyas had not deceived her, and her confidence both in the art and in the fidelity of the old servant was again confirmed.

This would have been all right and proper, had only the delicate child, for whom all this trouble had been undergone, not incurred an illness owing to his hasty nightly flight. The child

burnt with fever, and from time to time a shudder and spasm ran over his body in a way which Jetta had never noticed before. The anxious mother sat full of trouble by the side of the crib, in which at a former date the only son of the Augusta had slept, and she endeavoured by applying damp linen to cool the child's burning head. The upbraiding of her heart reproached her, for that if the child died, only her opposition to Rothari's will had killed him. In a neighbouring room Justina and Phorkyas whispered together, and it was not only the fear of disturbing his sleep that caused them to speak in a low tone.

"Why didst thou persist in the use of the Persian arrows," asked Justina, "which I usually only place in the bow of my emissary during the turmoil of battle?"

"I chose the means," said Phorkyas, "which would be least ascribed to an old woman. If he fell through weapons used by men, I should never be suspected. Moreover a servant confided to me, that it had been prophesied that Rothari would be slain by an arrow."

"An uncertain weapon in thy hands," sighed Justina.

"For this reason I passed off the phial on Jetta, that she might pour some of its contents in the open wound, but he knocked it out of her hand, so that it broke against the beams."

"Fate moves in her mysterious way," sighed Justina with an expression of deep sorrow. "If a German is to become Augustus, arrows bound away from him and poison finds him not. The gold helmet awaits him, and fate preserves him to destroy my child, him and his blood-brother. I fear that all this will be fulfilled."

At that instant Jetta appeared deadly pale at the door. "Phorkyas, quick, quick, the child is dying." The women jumped up like surprised criminals, and hastily followed Jetta to the child's bed. The little Tullius lay in convulsions. His limbs were distorted into the most unnatural positions. The eye was turned up so that the apple of the eye seemed oftentimes to entirely disappear, the little teeth gnashed whilst foam covered his mouth. "He is dæmoniacal," said Justina with cold assurance.

Phorkyas agreed. "Only incantations can avail here."

"No, no, pour water over him," cried Jetta.

The old woman hesitated. At last she made ready a bath. The empress, however, with fanatical looks, brought from its secret concealment an incense burner. Whilst Jetta and Phorkyas filled the bath and held down the miserable little doubled-up infant, Justina spread coals out on the pan and lit seven shells containing incense. Then she drew with a piece of chalk a mystic circle and placed her amulets around it. Jetta felt to her great delight now the limbs of the child in the bath were becoming more pliable. Phorkyas poured water on its little head and the convulsions immediately ceased, the eyes regaining their natural appearance. Joyfully did Jetta lift out the child to rub it dry with cloths. In the meantime the empress had lit the coals. She now laid aside her girdle and took the sandals from off her feet, then she seized Jetta's arm, saying in a low voice "Step inside and hold the child over the coals while I pray." Jetta, still confused from her fright and accustomed to obey the Augusta, gave way to the imperious woman's energetic wildness. The empress herself supported the mother's right, Phorkyas the left arm, so that she should not tire during the long prayer. And now Justina began

her incantations. First it was but a confused murmur which seemed to belong to no human tongue, and during which her lips scarcely moved. Then soon her tone increased, at times monotonously singing. She seemed to repeat what the Uhu mourns to the wood, and the wolf howls, and the serpent hisses. Finally she became weary, her bearing lax, and she broke out in monotonous supplications. "Elan, Elan, Elan, pugna oh Sabaoth, Bel, Balsumith, Oromazo, pugna! Anubis, Michael, Gabriel, Neoriel, pugna! Abraxas luminis superni affusor custodi infantem! Custodi, Elan, Elan, Elan." This went on for a while. In the midst of these incantations Jetta felt the child shiver three times. "Behold how the dæmon comes out of him," whispered Phorkyas, whilst Justina held her arm in an iron grip, and began anew with wild fanaticism her incantations. Suddenly the child's head rolled to one side. With a loud cry Jetta sprang up. "He is dead," she screamed in wild despair, breaking loose from the demented woman who still clung to her arm. "Quick, quick, water," she cried in an agony of terror. Phorkyas hurried forward and brought the pitcher, but all was vain, the child was stifled and no rubbing or sprinkling

could bring it to life. "It would have died in any case," said Justina with icy coldness, re-adjusting her girdle and sandals and collecting together her magic apparatus.

"So may thy son perish," cried Jetta in direful despair, "may they dash him to pieces before thy very eyes. Cursed may you both be; you have estranged my husband from me, you have slain my child. Curses on thee and thy boy."

Justina stood pale and trembling. She believed in the power of such words. When anything related to the beloved head of the young Valentinian, the heartless sovereign became as other women. All sentiment had in her collected in this one nerve, that was the point from which she could be set in motion. With heroic insensibility could she view the destruction of those around her, only her child must no rough breath touch. "The maniac has cursed my son," that was the only thing of which she could at that moment think.

Attracted by the awful shrieks which wildly echoed in the hall of the palatium Valentinian now entered his wife's apartment. He knew this room, as well as having cognizance of what Justina was wont to do here on dark nights. A look at Jetta,

who lay stretched over the body of the little Tullius, at the fumigator whose blue vapour still overpoweringly filled the room, at his wife who the picture of an evil conscience stood on one side, unable to speak, which usually was not her habit, told him all.

“Hast thou again done mischief with thy magic craze?” asked the emperor gloomily. Then he became silent as he saw the little corpse and Jetta’s tearless despair. The beauteous young mother aroused feelings of pity in his stony heart, but at the same time he thought in anger of Rothari, who would find here a new cause for bitter complaint. He considered over as to how what had taken place could best be concealed. For the moment nothing could indeed be done but to pacify Jetta. Kindly and gently did he address his words of condolence to her, and in order to have something to do, he ordered that after sunset the funeral pyre should be erected on the terrace behind the palatium facing the sacred river which Jetta so much loved. He assigned the most costly urn in the palace to receive the ashes of the little Tullius, he himself would be present at the sacred ceremony. Jetta shook her head. . “Pray

do not," she said with eyes grown bigger through terror. She alone with Phorkyas would attend the cremation, she prayed that no one, no one else should be present. She shuddered at the thought of standing at Justina's side in the hour of separation from her child. Valentinian agreed to this also. Happy at escaping in such an easy manner from this place depressing through the greatness of its sorrow, he led out Justina to order at once all necessary preparations. Holding the little corpse in her arms, Jetta remained behind in the room, deprived in her dull sorrow of even the consolation of tears. She felt herself alone, solitary, abandoned by the world, even by her husband, for whom her heart now cried out with passionate desire. Had not Rothari always told her, she would bring down misfortune on her own head through her blasphemy. Now it had come. Hour after hour passed in this dark brooding, and she felt nought but that her life was destroyed. When finally twilight set in and Phorkyas announced that the pile had been lighted and the terrace cleared of all spectators, the wearied mother was not able herself to deliver up the little corpse to the greedy flames. Her knees were not even ca-

pable of carrying it. She now ordered that the fire should be extinguished, she wished Tullius to be embalmed. But who here in Alta Ripa could do this? What unskilled man should lay his knife across those little limbs? "No," she moaned, "take him, lay him gently in the flame, and when all has been consumed lead me thither that I myself may collect the ashes. No strange hand shall touch them. Dost thou hear!"

Phorkyas took the little corpse, once more caressed its head which she supported in her hand, and then silently descended the steps into the garden. A long, long hour did Jetta sit alone in her solitary room abandoned by gods and men, then the old nurse came to tell her that the coals were now sufficiently cool to render it possible to take out the little heap of white ashes. With tottering steps and heavy eyes Jetta descended to the terrace behind the palatium, where the last evening glow lit up the gliding waters of the Rhenus, and the Gallic mountains towered out darkly, in the misty red gleam. By the uncertain twilight of the crepuscule the wretched mother gathered into the urn sent to her by the emperor the last remains of her darling. Alas, so little was

left of the sweet little being on whom all her pride, on whom a world of hopes even as late as the day before had depended, so inconceivably little. She herself poured out into the holy stream the remaining embers so that not the smallest portion of her child should be carried away by the wind. The urn containing the ashes she pressed to her heart and returned to the house with tottering step, often looking back at the sanctified spot, over which still hovered a small cloud of smoke. "Also a part of him," she sobbed and weeping sought her couch, holding the valued urn enfolded in her arms.

A glorious morning had broken over the Bühl, as Rothari cured of his blindness quitted the blockhouse. How clear did the colours of nature appear to him, of which he sitting in darkness had been deprived for nearly a week. Light and air did him so much good that he almost forgot his rage against Jetta. In the camp he heard from Arator where his fugitive wife was concealed, and the Comes made no secret of Valentinian's intention of retaining Rothari's child as hostage. Coldly and after a curt exchange of the facts did they pass, neither trusting the other. This new

blow at his paternal authority deeply incensed Rothari. Dark resentments against his faithless wife, hatred to the chain to which he had linked himself, rage against Arator and the Augustus, all stormed tumultuously within his breast. In this dark mood he arrived at Alta Ripa, where as it seemed to him he was already awaited. But the known servants and officials shyly avoided him. He read of some misfortune in their faces. Did Valentinian design some act of violence against him? Thus were those greeted at Treviri destined to end their lives in Mica's cave. Rothari grasped his sword tightly and determined if necessary to sell his life dearly. But the velarius whom he addressed accompanied him without opposition to Jetta's apartments. Rothari drew back the curtain and found himself facing the wife who had abandoned him. She crouched on the ground clasping an urn in both her hands, a very picture of sorrow. Her lips moved not, she gazed with infinite sadness at him out of her fixed, lifeless eyes. A dark presentment seized him.

"Where is my son, Jetta?" he asked with severe earnestness.

"Here," she cried with a burst of wild sorrow stretching out the urn, and Rothari read:

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He became speechless. "O, why didst thou wish to take him from me, Rothari?" said Jetta tearfully, "now we have both lost him." Was this the same Jetta who spoke to him in this mild tone? All pride had disappeared from her pale face, all majesty from her bearing. Burning grief, repentance, want of sleep and food had wasted her form, but the fixed gaze of her dark eyes, the appearance of her misery was so heart-breaking, that no reproach, no question rose to Rothari's lips. He however at the same time maintained his resolve of quitting this land, since the death of his child had loosened the last tie which bound him to this woman. All other she herself had severed. But misfortune renders the sight quick. It seemed as if Jetta could read his thoughts in his looks. Now nothing was left to her but him and he wished to go! All the unspoken, inactive love, which she in spite of all bore for him in her heart now surged up mightily. She threw herself wildly

at his feet and clasped his knees. "Leave me not Rothari, forgive me, reject me not, behold my misery," she sobbed. Calmly and mildly did the German look down upon her, but inwardly unmoved. Rather did a feeling of repugnance at the passionate behaviour of this Italian shoot through his heart. He sought for some calming words of consolation, but before he had found any Syagrius entered to usher him before the emperor. His eye had proudly and coldly glanced at the lovely woman lying on the ground whom he had at one time so hotly wooed. Ashamed Jetta arose from the ground pretending to arrange the spangle on her foot. Thus parted husband and wife. "With a lie," quivered through Rothari's honest heart. He must proceed at once to Valentinian, who ordered his presence, for the emperor had taken it on himself to inform Rothari of all that had taken place and reconcile him to his wife.

At the very hour in which Rothari secretly separated for ever from Jetta, the two originators of all this grief, Justina and Phorkyas, were busied in their secret workroom in the apartment in the tower over new arts and incantations. The room was artificially darkened, and only the pale glare

of a flickering torch lighted the room. The task on which the two Megærae were occupied must have been threefold terrible, for their magic implements lay scattered in disorder on the ground, as if the owner had raged among them in the highest state of excitement. Pale and ghostly lighted the blue flame from out of the bronze sacrificial vessel the two figures, so that the beauteous Justina appeared white as a corpse, whilst Phorkyas resembled a live mummy. A feverish excitement seemed to agitate the empress thus mystically engaged. Trembling she held on to the table, and all her motions were jerky and unsteady, whilst the half opened mouth strove for breath. The object on which the two women seemed engaged was indeed horrible enough. Both gazed fixedly at a curious yellowish ball, laid on a plate, and covered over with wondrous characters. The ball resembled the waxen head of a child, and by the unsteady flicker of the blue light, it seemed as if the lifeless features of the little head moved. At one moment the pale eyes seemed to turn, at another the thin lips to open. "How many more years will the Augustus live?" whispered Phorkyas into the child's small dried up ear. But all was

still. "He would like to speak," squeaked out the old crone.

"I saw plainly how he moved his lips and turned his eye towards me, but the talisman is not powerful enough."

"Lay therefore on him the *Sigillum Saturni* instead of the scarabs," lisped the empress. The attempt was repeated, but the *teraph* remained as silent as before.

"I would I had a sword with which three men had been killed," said Phorkyas, "therein lies a power which he could not withstand."

"Valentinian boasts that his has sent over thirty foes down Orcus," said Justina. "Wait, I shall fetch it," and she disappeared with tottering steps and trembling knees through the door. The old woman remained behind, but the play of the flame on the suffering child even terrified her when alone. The little face seemed by this flickering light to draw up in pain, the lifeless eyes gazed at her, the singing of the flame sounded like hushed weeping. She shuddered. She extinguished the flame by drawing a cover over the bronze cup, and lighting a lamp instead she quitted the room. She now remembered that she had also in her

keeping an efficient seal and she went to fetch it. Hearing however a man's step on the stairs she hastily returned to the apartment in order to reach her own chamber. It was Rothari who approached having been summoned before the emperor. Deeply brooding he had climbed one staircase too much. As he became aware of this he thought of turning back. But was not that Phorkyas who hobbled past that corner? Thus here were the potions brewed, with which he himself was blinded and his child prisoned? The rage of the Berserker overpowered him. The witch turned up at the right moment. With his own hand would he drag the old witch before the emperor, accuse her of sorcery, of decoying his wife, of attempt at murder, of deception, and should Valentinian refuse to do him justice, he would cast his sword at the feet of the Roman and ride off to the Alemanni; he would be freed and rid of his oath. He followed lightly after the old woman and entered the adjoining room. It was empty. But it struck him that the room adjoining was darkened and that the light of a lamp gleamed through the curtains. He carefully drew back the curtain, but even in this sequestered chamber he found no one. Phorkyas' traces were

indeed not to be mistaken. By the dim light of the shallow lanip he recognised mystic implements of sorcery, which curiosity caused him to approach. Dice, balls, pine-cones, shells and disks were scattered partly on the table in the middle of the small room and partly strewn over the floor. Without taking further notice of the disgusting implements Rothari looked about to see whether Phorkyas had concealed herself among the cushions. Thus searching about his eye lit upon a puzzling object which stood in an earthen dish on the middle of the table, glaringly painted up with all sort of mystical characters. On stooping over it to examine more closely the curiously shaped ball, the blood in his veins curdled, for he saw before him the head of a dead child. Disgust and abhorrence filled him, for he knew that ruthless sorceress understood how to cause these pale and thin lips to part, when they wished to receive information concerning all the secrets belonging to the earth beneath. Rothari examined with the deepest pity that little head thus made use of for such a disgraceful experiment. But this light fair hair seemed familiar to him, he had often looked into those pale eyes now fixed. Suddenly he felt

as if a bolt had struck him and paralysed his limbs. A deep sob tore up from his powerful chest. Those were indeed the features of his child, that was the loved fair hair, here was the scar near the eye which he had inherited from him; he took the little head in his hands and the veins in his forehead stood out and the old Berserker rage filled him anew. At that moment something in the next room moved, some one hobbled through the curtain. But the German had already caught the arm of the old woman in his iron grasp. She shrank back and her knees trembled, he however dragged her up to where stood the little head of the innocent child, looking into her distorted features with flaming eyes. "What seest thou?" he said in a fearful tone. "Speak, confess, or I shall shake the soul out of thy body," and he shook her till she thought to die.

"Tell it not to Jetta," wheezed out the old woman in a husky tone. "Her heart would break, it would turn her mad if she knew it. The empress did it. It all happened so quick. I could not stop it, and Jetta had offended her by cursing her child. 'What matters it,' she said, 'whether a dead child is burnt with or without a head.

Her own child must relate to me, whether her imprecations against mine will be fulfilled!"

"Why did Jetta curse the prince?" asked Rothari darkly.

"Jetta wished to drive the *dæmon* out of her child, the child then choked . . . He would have died in any case. She held the child too long over the coals . . . Justina pronounced the formula too slowly . . . I have already saved ten children through this invocation, but the empress spoils everything." Thus did Rothari learn the whole of the sad story.

"She has indeed become a veritable Medea," thought he, "and has slain her own child."

"Let me go," besought the old woman, aware of his milder mood. But unfortunately for her she endeavoured to break loose. He seized her by the throat, his rage now burning all the fiercer.

"Who shot the poisoned arrows at me?" he cried in a voice of thunder.

"Not I, not I," she gasped.

"Not thou?"

"Gratian," stammered out Phorkyas.

"Liar," cried the enraged Rothari, "insane, slanderous witch."

Phorkyas sought to loosen with her old trembling hands his grasp from her throat, but he tightened his hold. Her eyes stared horribly and started out of their sockets. "Viper, viper," he cried: "Oh, that I could strangle thee ten times over." And he threw the corpse at the feet of the gorgeously beauteous Justina who now re-entered the room triumphantly sword in hand. The Augusta sprang back with a shriek and dashed away as fast as her feet would carry her. "Now she will incite the guard against me," laughed Rothari mockingly as he drew his sword. "But the men are Germans. If I were to appear before them with this head in my hands and were to relate what Justina has done to me, there would be an end to this imperial family." For a moment he raised his hand, then said however, "No, I also will not destroy thy peace, thou poor child, and I will observe the oath which I swore to Gratian." Tenderly did he caress the light fair hair. "Have rest from me." Then he carefully laid the little head back on the cabbalistic dish. "I leave thee here," he said aloud, "as a proof of the cruelty of this house. Do thou thyself bear witness against the murderess. They will extract no other secret

from thy pale lips; fear nothing, my darling boy!"

He then again descended the steps, but went not to Valentinian. He felt that he would slay the tyrant at the first words of defiance he uttered. What had he to seek there? In the stable he found his horse and rode from hence. He had seen enough of this Roman people full of lies, deceit, and superstitious cruelty, and he quite panted after the pure air of his native mountains. "Back to thy people!" he cried. "Oh, that thou hadst never left them!" And as he rode away alone across the wide plain, he weighed over in deep painful earnestness, how he best could loosen himself from his oaths, and abandon the service of these men.

CHAPTER VI.

THE cries of the empress had attracted help, but such as was for her at that moment the most undesired. Gratian who was about to go out hunting heard in the passage the cries of the empress and hurried up the steps to her apartments. Justina falling from one fear into another, turned about

with redoubled screams and disappeared through an opposite door in the passage. Was it not the blood-brother of the murderous German and her own enemy who thus hastened towards her fully armed? She really believed at that moment that Gratian was an accomplice of Rothari and that spear in his hand was meant for her throat. Thoroughly astonished the young Augustus followed the fugitive, and whilst Rothari came down the front stair-case, he went through the entire flight of the empress' apartments back to the entrance without discovering what could have thus terrified Justina. He now spied near the door of the last chamber, which Rothari had just left, the body of the old Phorkyas. "Did a dæmon strike down the witch whilst she was busy about the black handiwork, or did she die at the sight of the horrors which she herself had called up?" said Gratian shaking his head. Grasping his weapon with a firmer gripe he stepped over the body and entered the secret mystic workshop. The first thing, which presented itself to his sight was the head of the little Tullius lighted up by the lamp, which Gratian with an expression of horror set aside. Then he inspected the mystic saucers, pans,

dice and amulets. Even the raised up plate in the brick floor did not escape the sharp eye of the huntsman, who immediately gathered that here was Justina's secret hiding-place in which were stored all the implements of her abominable art. With a grim smile the youth proceeded to empty this out so as to lay bare to Valentinian's eye the entire extent of these nightly proceedings. With a feeling of repugnance did he handle the skeleton limbs, scarabæi, engraved stones and chiselled metal plates, till a bundle of arrows attracted his attention. It seemed to him as if he had already seen such weapons somewhere, and the remembrance of them suddenly returned to him. Just such another missile with the gray heron's feather barb had he seen quivering in the beech near the cave where Rothari had slain the wolf. "I must show these to Rothari," said he, "we must compare them with the arrow which was lately shot at the hermit on the Bühl." Hastily did he collect the arrows and stick the whole bundle in his quiver. After that he had convinced himself that the place of concealment was thoroughly emptied, he spread the whole of the magic wares on the table and on the cushions,

waiting till some one came, whom he might send after the emperor. But Valentinian himself entered supporting on his arm the pale tottering Justina. Even in the adjoining room Gratian heard Justina passionately addressing the emperor. Before her very eyes in her own rooms had Rothari strangled Jetta's servant, by which two words she placed all the guilt of the magic dealings on Jetta's and the dead woman's shoulders. Rothari had wished to kill her also, and Gratian had pursued her with levelled spear. She continued not longer in this strain, for Gratian with a look of contempt stepped out from the small cabinet. He drew back the curtains, so that the light of day fell vividly on these horrors of night. Glowing with rage he then addressed Valentinian, "Before thou condemnest, see, O my father, how the illustrious empress has adorned her chamber. Behold here the head of a child lately slain, Rothari's son undoubtedly." Valentinian sprang back as if he had seen the Medusa, while the trembling Justina sank back on the cushions at the glance cast by his squinting eye.

"Your Highness certainly knew not that the emperor's edict threatens with the stake those who have such implements in their keeping," said

Gratian with unconcealed scorn. "I should also advise thee for the future to shuffle better thy magic cards, before that thou layest them aside. See here E. N. T. I. N. I. A., that must indeed mean Valentinian?"

"My son was meant!" sobbed out Justina.

"Good, my poor little brother, whose heart thou hast already filled with suspicion against me, so that the struggle for the sovereignty can never thereby come to an end But thine eyes seek something? Thou missest perhaps the poisoned arrows? I am sorry. Rothari will now compare whether they have any resemblance to certain small missiles which were twice shot at him from places of concealment."

Justina turned pale once more and began to writhe in agony.

"Thou mad woman," now cried Valentinian, still horror-stricken with what he saw about him. "If Rothari were to stick this head on the end of a spear, ride with it into the camp and there announce to the Germans what thou hast done, how long thinkest thou would our sovereignty here last? I advise thee to close his mouth with solemn declarations, before that he incites the sol-

diery to rise against us, and that thou must beg his pardon on thy knees. Go, before that my rage bursts out, go, or I might feel inclined to hack thy head from thy delicate white neck and send it to the Germans as an atonement. Go, go," he angrily cried as Justina was about to prostrate herself before him—"thou art a prisoner, till I myself set thee at liberty, thou frensied Megæra!" Slowly and with tottering knees did the culprit leave the room, tremblingly supporting herself against the wall. Gratian stood there a silent witness to this hateful scene. He himself in his father's place would have crushed Justina with a blow of his fist, but Valentinian's self-possession impressed him also. He again saw how the emperor, who often raged in the most immoderate manner over little excitements, became cold and calculating whenever a serious danger confronted him.

"Call the Velarius," now ordered Valentinian, "I shall cause this chamber of horrors to be closed up for all time." When Gratian returned with the officer, Valentinian said with majestic severity, pointing down to the body of the old Phorkyas, "A just punishment has here overtaken an aged

culprit; cast her body into the Rhenuſ. Burn theſe things here without that the ſervants ſee them. Bury thou the child's head in the garden, and heed how thou propitiateſt his dæmon. Thou anſwerest with thine own head for the ſtricteſt ſecrecy." The officer bowed and the emperor left the room together with his ſon to find Rothari. His feeling of juſtice was incenſed at the idea of being ſo much at a diſadvantage in regard to a man whom he ſo much hated. He would gladly have freed himſelf of Rothari, but the fact that Juſtina had ſo deeply injured the German, now again tied his hands, for it was one of the beſt ſides of Valentinian's character, that he only raged, when he could conſider his own ſeverity as juſtice. But if he now threw all the ſuſpicions which he entertained againſt Rothari in the ſcale, it would fly up in comparison to the weight of thoſe actions, which his wife had committed againſt this man. Even if the atrocities with which Juſtina had defiled herſelf, had not enraged him againſt that devilish woman, ſhe had nevertheless turned his ſuppoſitious claim againſt Rothari into an in-juſtice, and he could not forgive that even to her beauty.

But the storm which had gathered around the head of the sinning Justina did not burst. Providence, which often suffers long accounts to run on before collecting the debts, had decreed to settle later its account with Justina. For the moment another cloud had risen over the Wodanwald which called off Valentinian's thoughts from his offending wife. As Valentinian descended into the court of the palace in order to bring about an apparently accidental meeting with Rothari, he found himself suddenly surrounded by a crowd of unarmed Alemanni, who cried to him for mercy with bitter wails. "This moreover," growled Valentinian as the veins on his forehead swelled and his squinting eyes looked malignant. "Our sons, Augustus!" called out the Germans. "Give up the children, the hostages!" sounded on all sides out of the confusion of German tongues which he did not understand. The gigantic man drew himself up and motioned for silence. On this one of the men stepped forward. The frost of age lay already on his hair, clever blue eyes gleamed under red bushy brows. In spite of his unpretending leather armour and his tattered sheepskin-cloak his bearing inspired respect. He understood Latin, as did

many of those chiefs who alternately served one Cæsar as leader of the mercenaries to fight later against another. "Thou seest us here, ten nobles of our race," began the gray-bearded warrior, "who at the ratification of peace gave thee our sons as hostages that the Germans would observe the peace. We have observed it. We did not demand hostages from thee, as we did not fear thy attacks, but we thought that thou wouldest thyself observe the treaty and not compel us to have recourse to the sword. The land should be thine up to the mountains, from the mountains, ours. Thou didst first build wooden towers on these mountains and saidst, that thou must guard the outlets of the valley against the intruders, who without orders from our people plundered thy courts. We let this happen, for we thought, a wooden tower is easily burnt down. Stone soon took the place of wood, and now thou hast begun to build a castellum on the sacred mount, which you call Mons Piri. Our king told thee that this was a declaration of war. Thou, however, continuest to break thy word. Thou desirest war. If it be thy will to break the treaty to which thou didst swear, then give us back our sons. Believ-

ing thy oath we surrendered them to thee; we could not expect that thou would'st compel us to go to war." Calmly and modestly spake the old warrior, almost naïvely, calculating on a loyalty, such as a German presupposes in Germans. The others now began their cries afresh. "Our sons! My boys! Keep to thine oath, Augustus!" sounded wildly on all sides.

With dark looks had Valentinian listened to the barbarian orator. He could not deny that the affair really stood, as described by the German. But the feelings of justice which Valentinian felt to be due to a companion in arms like Rothari, were now entirely silenced. It was here a question of policy, of the empire, of the enemies of Rome, and as he had in similar cases even condoned assassination, in case he could thereby direct a deadly blow at the enemy, so now did he not shrink from a faithless deed of violence. The more he felt himself to be unjust all the more enraged did he become. Instead of replying to the prayers of the chiefs, he reviled the treachery of the Lentians who had forced him to war on the upper Rhine. He would do the hostages no harm, in case their people observed the peace, but the

safety of the empire required stronger guarantees than the necks of their sons. He must have the outlets of the valley of the Nicer in his hands, even if it should one day please the barbarians to abandon their hostages. The embassy only understood from this that the Cæsar refused. "Our sons, perjurer, restore us our boys!" they cried in wild despair. But Valentinian remained unmoved and angrily shook his wicked head. Thereat the barbarians broke into such ungovernable wails, crying out the names of their children, and cursing Rome's treachery so that the walls of the palace echoed with their shouts. Beseechingly did Gratian bend the knee before his sombre father and say: "Give them their sons and let us begin to-morrow to decide this affair with weapons." But the Augustus only bellowed out such a "silence," as caused the youth to change colour, step back and sadly lean against a pillar. The Alemanni however rushed amidst loud wailing to the gate, mourning over the death of their sons. Cursing and execrating they threw themselves unto their bare-backed horses and wildly galloped across the plain towards the mountains, and soon were they lost to sight. Raging and at odds with himself and family Valentinian retired

to his rooms to which he desired the presence of the Notarius, who had recommended him to adopt these measures of state policy. Sadly did Gratian shake his head. A war thus beginning with such an act of treachery appeared to him to promise little good. The atmosphere of lies and violence in this house seemed to oppress his candid and kind-hearted nature. "My father has become another man in Justina's arms," he sighed. "Things are here as in the castle of Herod the Jew." Thus thinking he whistled to his dogs and went down to the bank of the Rhenus, in order to dispel his melancholy by a hunt among the sedgy land.

Another witness had also heard this revolting occurrence with feelings akin to those of the young Augustus, the sorrowing Jetta. Behind the tapestries of her chamber which gave into the court had she been compelled almost against her own will to overhear the entreaties of the Germans to Valentinian, and the abomination of the entire proceeding shook her for the first time out of her own grief. "Only let me leave this citadel of lies and treachery," she cried to her father who had come over from the camp to console her. "No more will I eat Justina's bread, no more will I

bow down before this perjured tyrant. I shall humble myself before my husband and crouch at his feet till he has forgiven me the evil which I have brought upon us both." The old man took his daughter to his heart and after that she had finished weeping, he promised Jetta to take her back to the Villa on Mons Piri, so soon as he had obtained leave of absence from the Augustus and thanked him in his daughter's name for an hospitality, which she had so dearly bought. Arator found the Augustus holding council with Syagrius. He was evidently in a depressed, suspicious mood. "I also will go up," he said in a surly tone to Arator, "and see how the building of the castellum on the mountains is proceeding, and how your camp appears. Should war break out, I shall force my way from Mogontiacum towards the villages of the barbarians in the Taunus and thus compel Macrian to direct his attention thither. So long must you repel their attack. Among yourselves however there must be peace and unity, if the struggle is to end in a satisfactory manner. To add my share to this I shall take Justina with me over to the Farm, so that she may pray forgiveness of your son-in-law for her misdeeds."

Arator but half understood the meaning of this and was astonished that Valentinian laid the blame of the child's death so openly on Justina. As the Comes remained silent, Valentinian said in a peremptory tone, "Rothari must not be allowed now to break loose at a moment when war with the Alemanni is threatening at our very doors. He knows too much about us, for us to let him join the camp of the Alemanni. Keep him through kindness, or I shall keep him through force. You both shall be responsible to me for his remaining," he said turning towards Syagrius. The Notarius bowed his head and it seemed to Arator as if a cunning smile lay concealed by his red beard.

Whilst these negotiations were being determined upon in the palace at Alta Ripa, a scene of busy action might have been viewed in the blockhouse on the Bühl. Lupicinus stood in front of the house, surrounded by boxes, sacks and bundles, ordering with youthful energy the men servants, for the order had been given to carry down the entire property of his master to the Nicer, where it would be loaded on board boats belonging to t' Alemanni. The lord, thus he told the attentive serfs, was about to quit the

service of the Augustus and return to the halls of his ancestors.

"Does the Domina go with him?" asked a slender-limbed Gaul.

"St. Bartholomæus alone knows," said Lupicinus. "It is said that she herself bewitched her child to death—or was it Phorkyas the old witch, who now swims down the Rhenus—and that our lord in his rage has abandoned his wife."

"It looks here as if you were about to quit," said in a pleasing voice a young man standing at the gate, "what mean these preparations?"

Lupicinus looked up and saw a German in a plain dress, carrying under his cloak a large parcel which he carefully guarded.

"Shall I believe my eyes or not?" asked Lupicinus, "but if the evil one be not deriding me, thou art Vulfilaich, our lord's brother."

"I am he, good Lupicinus, and seek Rothari."

"Our Lord is in the camp below, to which Arator summoned him in the name of the emperor."

"There must I then seek him, for I must speak with him. But this burden I leave here.

Take care of the parcel, for it is highly valued by thy lord."

Lupicinus wished to take the bundle from him and said, "It does indeed look queer with its corners and edges;" but Vulfilaich would not deliver up the mysterious object. He himself went into the hall and placed it on a table. "So," began Lupicinus, "thou art tired of thy hill life, thou pious man, and now behavest thyself like one of us."

A faint suspicion of a smile passed over the monk's pale face, then he said, "I am what I was, and my Lord is the same. He ordered me to enter upon this path, I now return to my hiding place till he bids me come forth again." Lupicinus would have gladly heard more as to where Vulfilaich had been and what he had brought, but in the meantime the wolf having caught sight of the monk began to howl, to pull at his chain and to behave in such an insane manner that the monk quickly left the court. The remembrance of his last interview with the beast seemed also disagreeable to him. He only turned round again when he had reached the gate and said: "Let none open the parcel which I brought, it would much

displease the master." Naturally this warning was sufficient to cause all the men to crowd into the hall, where Vulfilaich had set down his burden. Full of curiosity did they surround the queerly shaped bundle.

"Antlers," said one.

"Too heavy for that," replied Lupicinus taking it up.

"It is not heavy," said a third, "but it feels smooth like some ornament."

"Then it ought to be burnished," again spoke up the first.

"We shall pack up the thing," decided Lupicinus, who was also bursting with curiosity. "I must however know whether it is in good order or already broken, so that the blame does not fall on us. Give me thy knife, Gaul!" He loosened the coverings, and a general shout of astonishment and delight broke from out the mouths of the men, as they beheld a helmet of beaten gold with beautiful figures in relief, and glittering with precious stones.

"What a ruby!" cried one. "This topaz! Look at that emerald and carnelian!" "But see

the strap hangs down, the screw is broken," said Lupicinus.

"It is good that we did not leave it in that condition, otherwise the strap would have been lost. What can those figures mean?"

"The wise Pallas, taming the furious Ares," said the Gaul, proud of his higher accomplishments. The Alemanni looked at him in astonishment. "The effigy means," continued the eloquent slave, "that the savage strength of the barbarians is only to be overcome by a higher knowledge of the arts of war, through the wily strategy of the ably planning Pallas. Above, however, stands fate, whose hand is stretched out of the clouds."

"Thou art a wise old boy," said Lupicinus good-naturedly to the Gaul. "I am astonished that our lord does not make thee his notarius. But he hates books." The Gaul sighed. "Quick, quick," said Lupicinus. "The master comes." He wished to pack up the helmet again, but the wolf in the yard began loudly howling, and the porter was summoned. Lupicinus therefore threw down the covers, spread a cloth over the shining helmet and went with the slaves to meet Rothari. Lupicinus now made his report, and Rothari replied

that the journey was postponed for two days, though everything must be ready for his departure. Rothari seemed agitated and ill at ease. It was plain that he was in no way pleased at the delay. He had had a long interview with Arator which immediately alluded to Jetta. Mildly, but in a firm tone, he laid before the father his complaints against Jetta, her black arts, the carrying away of the child, the blinding of her husband, and her share in the death of his boy. Arator could oppose nothing to all this. Aristocratic Romans were wont to divorce their wives on much lesser grounds, and Rothari could decree a severe punishment on Jetta, were he roused. Besides this the Comes was too proud to force his daughter on the barbarian. True, indeed, did Rothari's hardness sicken him at heart, for he well knew that this blow would completely overwhelm the bowed down wife who sat in solitude in the villa near the marble fountain. Rothari's decision did not seem to him to be irrevocable. If Valentinian succeeded in keeping the Alemann, the reconciliation of husband and wife was only a question of time. There was so much sorrow in Rothari's simple words, that Arator did not give up all hope for his child. The thing was

to postpone Rothari's journey. He therefore mentioned the request of the Augustus that now at the outbreak of a war Rothari must not leave the army. Rothari proudly demanded, who would prevent his doing so. The Augusta had outraged his child, in a manner much worse than Arator knew and than he could tell him. Valentinian had deeply insulted him, twice had a concealed assassin attempted his life, and no treaty bound him to Rome. Arator contradicted all this, and Rothari did not wish to disclose to him the last and terrible cause which drove him from the court. Jetta should not learn through him the horrible deed which had taken place, and he felt himself insulted in the body of his child. And also, should Justina deny it, how could he prove her crime? The only witness was as mute as the fishes which sniffled at her body in the bed of the Rhene, whose current tossed it backwards and forwards. When Arator saw that he could not induce Rothari to remain, he demanded from him a solemn oath, given before the leaders of the army, that Rothari would not fight against Rome. Rothari declared that he was about to take part in the war which the Alemanni waged on their northern boundaries

against the Burgondiones, on account of the salt mines, which both the nations claimed. He was willing not to take up arms for three years against Rome. He would be willing to swear to this in any manner pleasing to Valentinian. With that he bade farewell to Arator without sending any message to Jetta. But inwardly there was a more violent struggle going on than appeared on the surface. His heart still clung to the wife in whose arms he had tasted the greatest bliss on earth by a strong thread, whose deep gaze yet pursued him like some mysterious puzzle, whose majesty and grace he never felt more deeply than at the moment in which he returned to the smoky huts of his people, to which never at any time had any grace or any of the nine muses ever strayed. But take Jetta to the Alemanni?—What could she do there? Ruin his life a second time? “One does not go through the same tragedy twice,” he sighed. “This Roman world resembles a gorgeous theatre in which a horrible piece is played. Our courts are certainly no stages. How much alone she would feel there, she who daily longs for an audience, spectators and applause.” All this was very clear to him, but nevertheless he sighed.

Shortly after that Rothari had left the camp, the emperor appeared. He had inspected together with Syagrius the castellum on the mountains and was satisfied with the work. As all the stones and blocks had long since been hewn into right proportions the whole work could be completed in a few weeks. Valentinian praised Syagrius' performance and returned to the ramparts on the Nicer. Arator met him at the Porta Decumana to inform him of Rothari's plans. But the emperor shook his head, even before Arator had finished. "The German must stay, and as I am now here, I shall myself speak with him." He immediately jumped into the saddle and rode up to the Bühl. He required no witness to overhear what he had to speak about with Rothari. The punishment for Justina's crime, which he could not think of, Rothari himself should decree, and in chastising Justina he prevented Rothari's desertion. All this was but the cold calculation of a tyrant, to whom at heart nothing appears of importance besides his own sovereignty, but he was himself inclined to look on this proceeding as magnanimity. Could he not send Rothari to Spain, as in a similar case Julian had sent Rothari's father Vadomar? He

could cause him to be assassinated, as Constantine was wont to silence troublesome captains. Instead of which he offered some atonement. But it was not magnanimity which caused him to act in this wise. He feared the impression that those strong measures might produce on the Germans in the army. Should they say: Justina murdered Rothari's child, broke up his marriage, tried to murder him, and after all the emperor sent him into exile or caused him to be killed? That looked bad, and would arouse the German allies. Here was indeed a bitter pass for the mighty emperor, and his face became darker the nearer he approached the home of the Alemann.

In the mean time Rothari had entered his hall, which lost in thought he paced up and down between the piled-up boxes and baskets. Once more did he gaze upon the vacant scene of his departed joy, now lit up by the evening sun which gleamed with its golden rays through the small windows. The struggle as to whether he could part with Jetta began anew. If, thought he, he were to accept military service in another part of the kingdom. There Jetta could keep up the habits of her former life, and thus a separation would be spared to both. But would

she be happier in a second attempt? "No, no, no!" he at last cried. "Shall I serve the imperial fury, who sinned against my child? I have sacrificed my revenge to my alliance and to Gratian, but shall I wait till a third arrow has pierced the heart, which the murderers have twice missed? Shall I witness fresh abominations, other than those on which I looked yesterday? Cursed be this treacherous, perjured race! I will return to my people," and with his mighty hand he struck the table so violent a blow, that the cloth fell off the golden helmet.

He saw it suddenly light up like a red fire before his eyes. The smooth crest of the helmet shot out bright gleams into the darkened hall. The gems glittered like green and red stars, the setting sun was mirrored in the shining gold, and the usually darksome room of the German was filled with a wondrous, magic light. Rothari stood dazzled at the sight. Was this an omen? Proudly he took up the helmet. "I wished to give thee back to the perfidious Augustus, who perhaps to-morrow butchers ten young chieftains of my race, after having broken his pledge to us. No, now will I wear it. Rejoice, Valentinian, if

in three years I may fight with thee, then wilt thou behold me in thine own adornment and then woe be to thee, thou perjured emperor!" He placed the helmet on his head and paced proudly up and down the hall. It seemed as if a scintillating nimbus decked the terrible head of the giant, so fiery did the beams gleam in all directions. Finally wearied of this sport, Rothari wished to tighten up the band which hung down on one side. As he did not succeed in doing this, he called his steward to his aid. Lupicinus took the ornament to pieces and whilst tightening up the screw, he said: "The Augustus looked so curiously as he left after remaining so short a time."

"Where?" asked Rothari.

The steward looked at him in astonishment. "Where didst thou see Valentinian?" repeated the German.

"Why, he came down these steps, after scarcely asking at the gate, if thou wert within!"

"Valentinian was here?" asked Rothari incredulously.

"I myself held his horse, but he came back after a few seconds. He appeared enraged, and the squinting look he cast at me caused my blood

to run cold. He however jumped on to his horse, and galloped down the hill like a mad man."

Rothari said nothing. The emperor outside his door without entering portended nothing good. Could he have seen him wearing the helmet, and recognized it as his own? Very possible. Then, Rothari, beware of thy emperor's revenge! But was it possible? Possibly had the fickle tyrant repented of having wished to take the first steps towards a reconciliation. Certainly, the quick-tempered man would not have left so quietly had he surprised Rothari wearing his golden helmet. He would more probably have cut him down from behind. For a moment Rothari thought whether he should not return the helmet to him. "No, that would be cowardly. Even yesterday thou could'st have done it, to-day it would be a disgrace to thine honour. But prudence, keep thine eyes open." The following morning Arator again appeared. The venerable old man looked even more serious than usual, as he informed Rothari of the emperor's decision. Valentinian was displeased, he said, that Rothari had disturbed the peace of his palace by himself punishing Phorkyas, and by insulting his wife. He also set little im-

portance on his oath of not bearing arms against Rome for three years. With great trouble had he succeeded in procuring the assent of the Augustus to an agreement. Rothari should atone by the blood baptism of the Taurobolia for the bloody deed which he had committed, and take the oath of peace in the grotto on the reception of the last initiations. "Thou knowest that to-morrow begins the great feast of him born out of the rock. There shalt thou bind thyself through mighty oaths and exchange of grips and in holy fervour pour out libations amidst bitter imprecations."

Rothari looked straight into Arator's eyes. The trap seemed to him so clumsy that he only felt contempt for such men. But Arator returned the searching look of the German with a steady gaze. "He at all events does not appear to harbour any evil intent," thought Rothari. "But I feel certain that I shall never leave the grotto alive." "Let us oppose wile to wile," was then his next thought. "I submit myself to the Taurobolia and once that they are safely over, then do I secretly ride away from the mithraists. Nevertheless I shall keep my promise whether made to Arator alone in my house or to all of them amidst the

terrors of the grotto." Without giving a decided assent, he asked, "Where are the Taurobolia to take place?"

"By the Giant's stone," replied Arator.

"And who shall stand on either side of me?"

"Choose thy own companions."

Rothari thought a while, and then said, "Gratian and thee."

"I conduct the sacrifice as pontifex," answered Arator.

"Then propose thyself a companion," said Rothari.

"Dost thou agree to Nasica, my nephew?"

"He is faithless," thought Rothari, "but weak. He will dare do nothing." And therefore, not to offend Arator, he consented. They both moreover agreed that on this evening the act of atonement, on the following night the oath should take place in the grotto. So soon as the Comes had left him Rothari ordered the slaves to take his property down to the Nicer, the gold helmet included, and to ship it into the boats lying there ready. He himself gave instructions in the farmyards as to how horses and animals were to be treated. Everything was to be left at Jetta's dis-

posal on whose property the house was built. The dwelling-house he himself would lock up and give up the key to Jetta. At noon Lupicinus returned from the Nicer. No one had interfered with the shipment of the goods, which now through the measured stroke of the oars were proceeding slowly but safely up the Nicer and were perhaps even now out of the reach of the emperor's orders. Rothari saw therein a good sign. Perhaps had he been too suspicious of Valentinian.

The house was now put in order and he had only the key to keep in safety. So soon as the servants had left, Rothari loosed the wolf which sprang around him with joyous bounds. The German patted him and took him into the hall, whose windows he fastened from the inside. Then he bolted and locked the doors and showed the key to the wolf. "Watch, wolf, watch," he said to the animal who angrily growled. Then accompanied by his faithful companion he strode towards the forest ever keeping the key in his hand. He stopped near the woodland brook where he had so often lingered with Jetta. Sadly did his eye roam around the silent abode of a departed joy. Then he rolled away from a moss cushion on which he

had often sat with Jetta a large stone-block. "Watch, wolf, watch," he again said, putting down the key which he concealed under the stone-block. The wolf growled as if it would tear to pieces any who would dare approach. "Lie down, watch," again ordered Rothari, whereupon the powerful beast laid itself across the block. After a while a shrill whistle sounded from the edge of the wood, on which the wolf shot forwards with great bounds till he had caught up his master. On once more reaching the Bühl, Rothari wearied by his work and suffering sat silently down before his house, to wait for Gratian and Nasica who according to agreement would accompany him to the sacrifice. In his innermost soul he felt as if something must happen which would restore Jetta to him again. This vague hope kept him rather than his promise, which bound him but very loosely to these perjurers. Perhaps it was not prudent not to fly forthwith. But what could happen to him at a sacrifice at which Arator and Gratian were present. And curious as it was, the mysterious desire also to receive at the close of his life in a strange land the highest and most potential atonement had an effect upon his pious

mind. Yea even he would gladly have attended the last initiation in the grotto, had he felt certain of returning once more to the light of day in case he entered it. But neither Arator nor Gratian could protect him during the trials of the mysteries; the swords with which the courage was assayed, were sharp and none could vouch as to who wielded them.

CHAPTER VII.

SAD and solitary sat Jetta in the familiar garden attached to Arator's villa. Whoever had known her in the days of her splendour, would never have recognized in this pale trembling figure with deep sunken eyes the bright daughter of the house, who formerly caused a reflection of her light to illuminate every face gazing upon her own. Here was no longer the proud, hasty, overbearing Minerva of former days. The strength of her mighty life seemed exhausted and the inward annihilation, which together with the nullification of her marriage and the death of her child, had come over her, gave her whole being a tranquillity

which was not natural to her. Even the news of Phorkyas' sudden death produced no impression on her. She knew that Rothari lived once more on the Bühl, but he had sent no message to her. All her past stood on this evening-hour gloomily before her eyes, and as the shadows grew with the setting sun, so did the sadness of her mind increase. The monotonous pattering of the marble fountain spoke to her that day only of dark sad tales. She passed in mental review one day after the other of her married life, and the spirits which she conjured up testified against her. What a bridal joy had she prepared for Rothari in the horrors of the grotto, how she had tortured him with obstinate silence and enraged him with passionate contradictions, how had she given way to every sickly mood and estranged the healthy man from her through weakly caprices. How silly and vulgar had been her conduct towards her cousins. But above all the sad secrets which had arisen between them from the very first day on. Her cabbalistic traffic which she carried on in spite of him, till enmity had insinuated itself between them, till the foolish Phorkyas possessed more of her confidence than did her husband, and till finally her husband's

eye-sight was no longer sacred to her. Now she sat here once more in the sites of her former joy—a wife laden down with guilt, solitary, alone, abandoned. And to one sorrow was added another, she could say with the poet. The wife was unhappy and the mother miserable. She wished to save her child from its father, and had killed it; she had sacrificed her whole happiness to the black art—such was the sad circuit in which coursed her thoughts. Thus did she find herself at the place in which two years before she had sat enthroned as queen. Above her rose the stars, but what mattered it to her, what that day their figures told. They could bring nothing more, take nothing more away from her. True indeed that she was still young, still beautiful, and free also, if Rothari separated from her. Syagrius would prove to her, that in her all was as formerly. But she herself was not the same that she had been before. We are no longer the same, deceived, without confidence, without belief, without hope; the purple has fallen off our shoulders, the diadem is lost and our soul shudders. We are no longer able to do anything, because we no longer believe in ourselves. As Jetta lay back sad and wearied

in her chair, she heard steps, but did not turn round till a timid voice said with foreign accent: "Thou camest once to me, Jetta, when I was sad and my husband wished to abandon me, to-day they say, that it is with thee as it was with me at that time. I wished to see if I could not help thee." It was Bissula. Jetta looked up at her wearily. Had she come down so low that this plain uneducated barbarian woman could offer her help? Darkly did she fix her eyes on the unwished-for visitor. "Not this look!" said Bissula. "See I once considered thee proud, and that art thou also. But I also considered thee bad, because thou hast intercourse with the secret powers. I saw thee however once in thy garden and thou didst bless every flower, and I said to Ausonius, in spite of all she is good. I loved thee for being so beautiful, now I love thee because thou can'st weep as we others do. So tell me thy sorrow."

Jetta replied, impatiently turning to one side, "Thou knowest it well!"

"Rothari will go away and leave thee here? Why dost thou not follow him against his will?"

"Shall I as does his wolf follow close up to his heels, and lick his hands?" said Jetta bitterly.

"Has he beaten or kicked thee?"

"Jetta is not to be beaten."

"Ah, then all is right. Dost thou think that I should be to-day Ausonius' legal wife, had I let him escape, every time that he wished to run away? I followed after him, I held on to him, I wept, I clasped his knees, and behold now are we happy and he no longer thinks of abandoning me, as, since he has the podagra, he always says, that no servant would ever have attended him as I have." Jetta remained silent. It is true that she inwardly thought that what was befitting for Bissula, was not befitting for Jetta, but an inward voice said to her: "she is happy in being devoid of feminine pride and I am wretched. How does it avail me to be Jetta. I have nothing to forgive myself for, my honour is whole, untouched, pure as glass, but can I live on that and be happy?—I would I had been a woman like this, but I am not such even now."

"Jetta!" began Bissula anew, "thou wishest to be once more with thy husband. One does not let such a handsome man, so tall and with a fair beard, escape without a struggle. But between you there lies a moat, that is thy pride. I know how

to bridge this moat so that thou mayest pass over with dry feet. Thou can'st cross over to save him, so that he must needs fall at thy feet and thank thee."

"Is Rothari in danger?" cried Jetta, bounding up like a tigress.

"Thou seest, that thou still lovest him," said Bissula slyly.

"Answer me, what knowest thou about Rothari!"

"Well," said Bissula. "This evening they assemble at the stone of the giant, where Rothari is to obtain the baptism of blood as they call it. To-morrow is he to take a solemn oath in the grotto of Mithras, not to fight against Rome. Under these conditions has Valentinian permitted him to leave. I asked Ausonius whether Rothari would really leave the day after to-morrow, he however answered, "Yes if he be still alive." So I thought if thou wouldest be reconciled to him, he would remain of his own free will and then Augustus would not require to kill him. It would be a pity for such a handsome man."

"By the stone of the giant, sayest thou? And to-day? I must thither, come, accompany me. If

I must cover him with my body, the murderous brood shall never touch his beloved head." She had already thrown around her in feverish haste a dark cloak, and now ordered Bissula to follow her. "Ausonius will scold," said Bissula, "if thou thinkest however that we could save Rothari, I shall go with thee. He was always kind to me." Without an answer Jetta hurried forth and Bissula followed. The sky was covered and a rain wind blew over the Rhenus. The Nicer flowed dark and horrible. The heights were black and the camp resembled with its high scarps some fearful sarkophagus which stood in the middle of the plain. "They are again celebrating their mysteries in the woods," said the Roman sentry to his Christian companion as the two women unaccompanied crossed the bridge at a late hour. It was more difficult to induce the guard at the exit of the bridge to permit the women to pass through, but Jetta gave her name, saying that she wished to go to her house on the Bühl and before that the post could make up its mind, she pressed hurriedly forward. For she already saw lights moving along the mountain side which showed her, that the festival at the stone of the giant had begun.

This name was given to a clearing in the wood, some hundred yards above the level of the valley close to a wall of rock. In the midst between mighty oaks the antediluvian storm had piled here mighty lumps of rock in so curious a manner, that a huge block of stone, like to a table, lay supported on two gigantic masses. By this nature had shaped for itself an altar which man had only to make use of. Even in the days of the Kelts numerous human sacrifices had been offered up here. Stretched out on the flat stone prisoners and slaves had ended their lives in this sacred grove through the knife of the longbearded Druid, and the channel was still visible on the block out of which the blood drained down. The murmurs of the topmost trees told of sighs and groans, and the roots of the red oaks were richly soaked with gore. Then came the Suevi. Human sacrifices were less in number, but noble steeds fell under the sharp steel of the sacrificing priest and the bleached skulls of horses gazed with widely distended nostrils down from the oaken trunks to which they had been nailed. How often had those warriors sat around the vat containing the barley juice and swallowed down their horse stew. When

the Suevi had retired and Rome occupied the land on the Nicer, the horses' skulls which the Germans had left behind were cast down from the trees and the bloody human sacrifices were interdicted to both the Germans who had remained behind, and to the immigrating Gauls. But the place remained defamed. The sequestered grove was now looked upon as the sanctuary of Hekate tergemina, goddess of the cross-roads, of the change of moon, who dwells in the moon cavern. Even now the whispering shades under the aged trees speak of dark atrocities, which a bloody delusion practises in secret this day, as it did in times past. The worshippers in the Mithras grotto had chosen this weird spot by the giant's stone in order to celebrate the Taurobolia with Rothari. This terrible ceremonial consisted in that the person to be consecrated suffered the blood of an animal slain above him to trickle down over him, in order to be cleansed of his iniquity through the blood of the animal sacrificed. The indefinite presentiment of a danger had been the immediate cause which induced Jetta to be present at the sacred solemnity. On her way she had formed the project of insisting on playing a part in the work of atonement

as Rothari's wife, as indeed she had taken a principal share in his crime, if not been its direct originator. Did she, Arator's daughter, stand with him in the trench, or under the sacrificial stone, the murderers' hands would have to abstain from their intention and if the worst came she would die together with her husband. Her request could not be considered as remarkable since the Taurobolia were also administered to women, and that Jetta herself was among those initiated in the grotto of Mithras, having even attained to the rank of "lioness."

Whilst she thus, oftentimes retarded by Bissula hurried towards the light which told of the commencement of the mysteries, the solemn procession of the initiated proceeded thither from the Bühl. A bull, a ram, and a goat had been chosen that evening from among Rothari's flocks, and these animals wreathed with massive oaken garlands opened the procession, which descended from the house of the Alemann to the giant's stone. Behind the animals and their leaders came Rothari's lofty figure decked with golden ornaments and clad in white garments. His companions were Gratian and Nasica both wearing

the flowing mantle of the Phrygian god and the pointed cap. Behind these followed Arator as pontifex or holy father, in wide flowing priestly garments. At his side Statius and Syagrius with wreaths on their heads, the one carrying the sacrificial axe, the other the knife. A motley group of the initiated, wearing for the most part the white toga, whilst others clothed in the weather stained paludamentum, or in the warlike gaudiness of panther skin and nodding crest, closed the procession. Having reached the place of sacrifice the animals were led up the rock over a bridgeway and then fastened to rings there let in. The bellowing of the bull sounded smothered in the silent night, echoed by the mournful sounds of his two smaller companions. So soon as the animals were chained a fire was lighted on the stone, so that the tops of the trees were phantastically illuminated. Ghostly did the circle of the attendants appear as it surrounded the stone lightened up by the fire, whilst the fanciful shadows of the dark shapes against the rocks and lofty trunks moved hither and thither. During these preparations Gratian stood near Rothari, watching every movement of his fellow-companion Nasica,

ready to whisper to Rothari the moment Nasica turned his back. Rothari had noticed Gratian's unrest and having had his doubts aroused as he came, the youth's excitement seemed to him suspicious. Even on their way up it had appeared strange to him, that Gratian carried a weapon concealed in his cloak, which however had not escaped his sharp eye. The youth, annoyed at not being able to carry out his purpose, threw back his Phrygian cloak to one side, and out of the quiver which the German had long been watching, some arrows protruded. Rothari looked fixedly at them. Suddenly his brows contracted and his eyes gleamed. He pulled out one of the little missiles without that Gratian felt his doing so. They were the same that he knew but too well. His soul cried out in bitter contempt; "Et tu, Brutel!" Then he laughed derisively. "So the witch after all spake the truth and I was a fool to believe in the honour of even one Italian." In the meantime Arator had ascended the rock, veiled his face and uttered in a low indistinct voice the mysterious prayers. "Approach," he then said in a louder tone. "Who will present thee?" now asked Syagrius, who held the rope which they were accus-

tomed to wind as symbol round the neck of the person about to be initiated.

"Thyself," replied Rothari, "and Statius."

"What means this," whispered Gratian "thou didst choose me and Nasica to accompany thee."

"I fear to scratch myself against thy poisoned arrows," rejoined Rothari sarcastically, as he threw the delicate weapon which he still held in his hand at the feet of Gratian. "I declare myself loose from thee, our blood-alliance is at an end," he added, coldly turning his back on Gratian. The young man trembled with excitement, the tears rose to his eyes. But here, where he must spare Justina, could he find no answer.

In the meanwhile Statius and Syagrius having exchanged looks and whispers, Syagrius stepped forward and laid the tightly wound rope twice round Rothari's neck and shoulders. As Gratian wished to prevent this, Statius said with a mocking laugh: "Permit me, Augustus, I owe him an atonement for the joys of his marriage feast and he me." Thus saying he seized hold of one end of the rope, whilst Syagrius grasped the other tightly. Thus as prescribed by the custom of the sacred rite they led Rothari like some victim to

the sacrifice up to the stone and disappeared with him into black night. Rothari laid himself down close to the gutter from which flowed the blood. The moment the baptism was completed he would return by the same way under the stone to join the others, exhibit his blood-stained garments and receive as "born again, as one who has atoned" their congratulations. But the German felt convinced that he had fallen into bad hands and so soon as he had disappeared into the shade under the stone, he thrust his left hand between the rope and his throat, keeping the other free for a struggle. In the meanwhile Arator having finished his prayer on the stone, seized the axe and stepped towards the bull. In his muscular arm the old man grasped the bright weapon, it whistled through the air, the animal reared up but once, a jet of blood flew upwards and the bull lay dying on the stone-block, whilst its hot blood poured down over Rothari.

Whilst these preparations were proceeding Bissula and Jetta had climbed up the path from the other side, which led to the stone lying somewhat below. Beneath them gleamed the torch-light and smothered murmurs reached the ears of the two women. Bissula, who did

not belong to the initiated, remained timidly behind, whilst Jetta courageously climbed down the narrow foot-path to the steep rock, ever following the lights, which shone from among the bushes below. The branches here divided and the terribly beautiful spectacle lay exposed before her. On the slab she saw the slaughtered bull; clearly lighted by the flame the venerable figure of her aged father stood prominent; opposite in a circle she beheld the serious faces of those attending the sacrifice, illumined spectrally by the unsteady flickering of the fire. Jetta now saw that she had arrived too late, but where her father directed the sacrifice, no danger could threaten Rothari. She remained in silence standing on the jutting rock. She was now seen by the men below. All eyes were turned towards the figure wrapped up in its black mantle, hovering there on the edge of the rock above them all, at one time lighted up by the flickering flame, at another concealed by the dense smoke. "Jetta the sorceress" was whispered from one to the other. Never had she more resembled the goddess of the cross-roads than at this uncanny hour, in which her dark figure rose above rock and tree. But whilst all looks were fixed on Jetta, a noise

arose from underneath the stone as if of struggling men. "Murderous brood, cowardly assassins!" cried Rothari's powerful voice, "take that and that!" and at the same moment the crushing of bones hurled against the rock was heard, and before that Jetta could even make a step forwards, the notarius Syagrius came bounding in wild terror from under the rock, pursued by the German, who stopped a moment to rid himself of the rope. With widely distended eyes, ghastly pale, Jetta had gazed at the spectacle which took place at her feet. What she now looked upon appeared to her as in a dream. She saw her father's white head bend low, Arator grasped his axe and followed after Rothari, springing forward close to the edge of the stone the old man aimed a downward cut. Jetta saw how Rothari's tall form stooped, but the axe fell on the neck instead of on the head and with a wail of woe the warrior fell heavily down. Whilst the sudden shock robbed Jetta of her senses, a wild struggle arose on the other side of the sacrificial stone, where Gratian seizing the notarius by the throat sought with trembling hand for some weapon with which to stab the traitor. But Nastica grasped his arm and held him back. And

now others also cried "treachery" and declaimed against the desecration of this holiest of all sacrifices. The notarius then called for silence in a stentorian voice. "What we did," cried he aloud, so that the woods echoed, "has been by command of the emperor. The perjurer, whom we have slain, intended to cross the Rhine at the head of the foes of Rome, and with the help of the Germans cause himself to be named Imperator. Valentinian himself found him wearing yesterday the gold helmet which disappeared so miraculously at Solicinium and you know what this helmet portends. You likewise know what myth was purposely spread about the camp so as to ease the way to sovereignty for the secret possessor. He who is Cæsar's friend must approve of what we have done. And now extinguish the torches and the flame on the altar." Nasica had in the meantime approached the stone to look after Rothari. "Is he dead?" asked Syagrius coldly. "He will not pick himself up again," replied Nasica, "but Statius begs for help as the German has badly damaged his skull." Two of the white-clad brethren now crept under the altar and carried Jetta's seriously hurt cousin down the hill. Whilst all this was going on the aged Arator

leant up against a tree, pale and exhausted. The axe had fallen from his hand. As Syagrius approached him he made a motion of horror. Then he cried: "Oh my daughter, my daughter." He alone, as being the officiator, had not seen Jetta, and now sadly made his way home, himself to bring the news, to explain why he had been compelled to act in this way and in no other. Some of those present now unbound the sadly moaning beasts brought as victims to be sacrificed and let them loose in the woods. Finally the fires were extinguished and the torches stamped out. Gratian made a movement as if again to join Rothari, in whose guilt he did not believe, but a well-intentioned old soldier held him back. "Leave the dying man alone with his wife," said the veteran. "I shall remain close at hand to help her." The youth consented, but he departed determined to send up a bier and to make preparation for the honourable burial of his friend. Thus did they all descend the hill, filled with terror and awe at the dreadful sacrifice.

Jetta had lost her senses on seeing this terrible event take place, she lay motionless leaning against the rock, whilst her companion, hearing the confusion and cries, ran away weeping. Jetta's stupor was of

no long duration. She would go to her husband, perhaps he yet breathed, perhaps she could yet save him. Whilst the men hurried hastily away, she climbed down to the place of sacrifice. A faint glow of light from live coals and a torch lying on the ground still marked out the scene of this ruthless deed. Jetta climbed down, seized the burning torch and approached the rock with firm step. There lay her husband. She stuck the torch in the ground and knelt down by the body. Rothari's head hung down and the wound in the neck gaped. Gently did Jetta take the warrior's head, she joined the edges of the wound together and bound them with her veil. Then she lightly leant him against the rock. He was still warm, she felt a gentle pulsation in his veins. "Had they not all run away, even to Bissula, we could have saved him," she sighed. "Alas, that Phorkyas is dead, she would certainly have helped him." But he moved his lips, or was it the flickering of the torch in the wind? No, his eyes opened large and clear.

"Jetta," she heard him softly whisper, "Jetta, my faithful wife."

"Oh, my husband hast thou forgiven me?" she cried in a voice of exquisite bliss which pierced

through in spite of its deep sorrow. He motioned with his hand, she was to bend her head close to his lips.

"I shall forgive thee," he whispered, "if thou bringest our son to the Alemanni."

"Rothari, remember our child is dead, dead through me, through Justina."

The hated name flashed like a streak of bright lightening through his mental darkness, he saw in a moment the veritable position of affairs. "Right . . . he is dead . . . I know, I know . . . A smile passed over his countenance cramped with pain. "I shall again meet with my child in the hall of the gods. I will teach him to cut out arrows . . . unpoisoned arrows."

"Oh, Rothari, break not my heart."

"They came from Gratian, I saw them in his quiver. They lured me hither. They are all murderers"

"I will quit them, I swear it," and she kissed his dying lips. "My just fate has overtaken me," he said, "why did I forsake my people, Wodan's revenge has fallen upon me. But do thou go to Macrian, tell him he must avenge me he must clear Wodan's sacred wood of these vipers."

"Rothari," she cried out dolorously.

"Thou wilt not, because thou knowest not all." And he looked up clear and fixedly in her eyes as in the days of his strength. "When I was called by thee to Alta Ripa," he said aloud, "I then thought that to be the bitterest moment of my life. But worse was yet to come, my poor wife! I saw in the hall, as I was about to visit the emperor, Phorkyas. I hastened towards her—she fled. I followed after her . . . thus I found myself in a room in the turret with small round windows, thou knowest it—Your magic scrolls, tables and implements were spread about the ground and on the table" Jetta sighed. "But all this left me cold," continued Rothari in a husky voice, "compared to the sight which met my eyes. On a dish covered over with painted figures lay—the head of a child." Jetta uttered a wild cry. She suspected what was about to follow, as with eyes grown big with awe she gazed at the dying man and forgetful of his wound grasped his arm. "I approached," said Rothari in a louder tone, "and examined the pale face, and who was it, Jetta? It was the head of our Tullius, the head of my dead son" All the blood had left

Jetta's face and even her lips turned pale, she resembled a corpse, but these pale dry lips stammered out: "Justina, she alone could do this."

"And for this cause, Jetta, do I demand revenge. Not for my blood, but for my child. I slew Phorkyas, but Justina lives, laughs and mocks us. I can no longer war against this beauteous smooth viper. Go thou to Macrian, tell him that he must bruise her head, hers and those of her whole brood." Jetta gazed fixedly into space. She saw nothing but the head of her child severed from its trunk, she saw the two furies engaged on this fearful work. The child opened its lips, moved its eyes, began to speak—Horrible vision—she buried her head in her hands and sobbed in bitter grief. Rothari however spoke again. "Behold, the gods have punished us in that in which thou didst sin, therefore promise me that when thou returnest to the house, thy first care will be to burn up thy magic rolls." . . . His voice became weaker, but once more did he rouse himself. An anxious expression showed on his dying face, that he feared not to be able to say, what was of importance. "The key of the house lies near the pond under the stone before the moss bench," he whispered. "But fasten

up the wolf, he watches it. Dost thou hear, fasten him." In a low scarcely audible voice he continued. "When thou again occupiest the house, hang my bloody garments in the hall and relate to every Alemann how Romans keep the blood compact . . . so that they may revenge me on Justina, . . . on Valentinian, . . . on Gratian, dost thou hear, also on Gratian!"

The words of the dying man in vain endeavoured to force their way out. A rustling sound in the tops of the trees: the Walküre who hovers above battle fields and sacrificial altars kissed him. He ceased breathing. Rothari, Vodomar's son, son of the Gods, had gone up to Asgard to the hall of the heroes, to hurl spears, listen to the songs of the minstrel and to drink meth with the Gods from whom he descended. Silently did Jetta remain by the corpse. But even that moment passed over without producing an impression on her. Ever before her did she see the head of the dead child whom she had at one time petted and whose fair hair she had kissed, and she saw the painfully plaintive expression on his face and the little pale lips trembled as if they would say something to her. "I will revenge thee," she whispered, "you both." Then again she gazed

into space, as if her mind had darkened ever like to the torch near her, whose light burnt feebly and then died out. The wailing hoot of the owl sounded dismally in the woods but she heard it not. The night dew chilled her very marrow, but she continued her death watch. Then as the day broke she heard Gratian's voice, who had ordered a bier to be brought up on which to carry away the dead man. Her presence of mind returned. The voices sounded nearer and nearer. She shuddered. She could not look on any of the murderers, this one least of all. Wearily did she totter off a few yards and hide within the bushes. There she lay down, her face pressed to the ground, wrapped up in her dark mantle, motionless like a corpse. As after the end of an hour she once more approached the place, it was empty and abandoned. Only the trodden grass and the flies swarming over the bloody streaks gave notice that the chronicle of this place of sacrifice was enriched by yet another dark deed. For a moment Jetta hesitated as to whether she should return home. Had he not told her that the key lay in a place where they had often together hidden it ere now. But then she would come among men and

she wished to be alone, quite alone, till she had made up her mind what she would do. Mechanically did she follow the print of a foot through the high grass which led to the slope, but on finding that she was descending, she began once more to climb upwards. For a long time did she stray through the woods. The sun poured down hot upon her unprotected head, she felt it not. The thorns pierced her feet, she heeded not. Finally she sank down wearily. As the blood began to throb less fiercely in her temples, she looked around, she thought to recognize the place. It was the clearing, where once Rothari had brought in the young wolf as captive. In yonder place behind those bushes must the cavern be. An idea suddenly shot through her mind. Here in concealment would she wait till the hour had come to fulfil Rothari's bequest. She climbed up, found the entrance to the cavern, she sank down and a deep sleep freed her from the misery of this night of murder. Jetta awoke in the evening as the rays of the setting sun fell deep into the interior of the cavern. With fixed gaze she beheld the reflex of the evening sun on the red sandstone, the lurid sky glowed through the green bushes.

All swam in blood. Her heart contracted at the painful recollection, but again she fell asleep. Only at midnight did the piercing blasts of the valley wind bring back her mind clear and free to the present. Silvery moonlight lay outside and the genial rays of the goddess played mystically around the ancient trunks. Glowworms hovered over the grass swarming with darting sparks. Below in the valley murmured the Nicer and all around breathed the air and peace of a warm summer night. She however lay there solitary and alone. Her child slain by her own hand, dismembered even after death. Her husband murdered, her own father his assassin, her friends traitors, accomplices in the deed, cursed by the last words spoken by her husband . . . She was alone, alone in dreadful solitude. Should she put an end to all her woes? But the fulness of the young life within her shuddered before death, and her active mind yet saw an object, which was called revenge. The fearful blows of the last hours had broken all the cords of the harp of her mind, all harmony was gone, but one cord yet gave a sound, and that sound—revenge. She could not rid herself of this discordance, it was the only note left

to her. Her life had no other aim, she must punish Justina and her husband's murderers. How—she knew not yet, but she would know it, she felt that, for the necessity was as determined to her as the eternal justice and the fixed course of the stars. Whilst she thus brooded inside the cavern she heard a rustling which approached nearer and yet nearer. She shuddered, for she feared that she was being sought for. But a joyous howl now sounded. The wolf whilst on its nightly excursions had scented her trail. Already he leapt on her, licked her hands and face and ever and again ran in and out to give vent to his joy. The delight of her dumb companion touched Jetta even in this hour of her deep grief. She stroked him with her soft hand and said, "Yes, thou faithful beast, we belong to one another. I also have turned into an inhabitant of the caves, a she-wolf. Remain with me, O my companion, we have a dark work and shall not separate till it is finished." She laid her hand on the powerful animal and obediently did it lie down at her side and again she sank back into her state of deathlike exhaustion.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN vain had Vulflaich waited in the camp for Rothari. As the night came on he went up to the Bühl. Here he learnt from a heathen slave who looked at him suspiciously, that his brother had been there, but would not return before the break of day. The young penitent hesitated a moment as to whether he should claim his brother's hospitality, but the heavy beating of his heart showed him that this thought was but an invention of the evil one. It was true that he had seen everything in the court in the greatest confusion, but if Rothari had not yet moved to another place, Jetta surely also tarried here and quickly did the youth turn about and hasten down to the river. How joyously had he gone about his work the last few days. He had done something for the good of the world, he had carried out something. Whilst concealing his mysterious bundle under his cloak he felt himself to be a messenger of peace between Valentinian and Rothari, between their people and his people. When he laid himself down in some quiet place with the helmet near

him, he then enjoyed the bliss of a fatigue earned by hard work and not through visions. He patted the well-watched treasure with a certain tenderness and joyfully sang out his hymns. How was it that now the old struggle again came over him as he once more stood in the place where he had once seen Jetta with the child at her breast? Raging with fever he hastened away. The unchaste dæmons had got possession of him again. On reaching the river he cast away his clothes with quick determination and plunged into the seething waters. The cooling off did him good. He laid himself down in a shallow place in the middle of the river and let the current pass over him, so that it broke around him in white eddies. There did he lie for many an hour and gazed up into the dark tempestuous sky over which the clouds flew past and he looked into the black waters and the dark peaks of the hills. Soon he himself became but a weak sensitive object in the midst of the wealth of this life of nature. Around him was roaring and rushing, and he lay in the current like a stone and increased the eddying and surging. At any moment his eyes might close, then would he be swept away and be freed from the struggles of

life. His stormy passions would then be allayed. At last he arose, waded to shore, and put on the clothes which Rando had given him and then sank into a refreshing sleep at the foot of a rock. When he awoke he remembered his mental temptation with shame and he determined to pass the day in exercises of penance and only to face Rothari and Jetta when he had strengthened himself by prayer, and had subdued the lusts of the flesh by long fasting and hourly flagellation. Near to a precipice of lofty granite blocks behind the hedges and lilac bushes he knelt down and began his pious work. The sun described its course above him and alone saw the severe penance with which the youth tortured himself. Long after that it had set and the night broken in, did the monk once again lie down in the river and let the waves break over him. Then he arose. The day of penance was over. He would now hasten to the cavern, strengthen himself with the provisions there stored, sleep and then appear before Rothari and inquire if he knew of some other work through which he might become a messenger of peace on earth. But as the way to the heights led past Rothari's house he felt that

it was in vain that he had tortured his body. They were all again present the evil spirits who had pursued him in this valley. They defiled before him at times like animals, or fauns, or even nymphs, and above others did one allure him, the beauteous dæmon with black eyes and snake-like black hair. She resembled his brother's wife, at one time she suckled a child, at another she stretched out her full beauteous arms towards him. Vulfilaich made the sign of the cross, for the nearer he approached to his warm couch, all the more distinctly did the presence of this unchaste tempter make itself felt. "Is it Lilith, or Asmodæa or the Helen of Simon Magus?" he murmured. "I will make use of the prayer of St. Sisinnius against her," he said, as forcing his way through the bushes he found himself standing at the entrance of the cavern. But what was that? The enemy had this day taken possession of his very sanctum. He heard in his cavern an evil growl and a soothing voice, after which all was once more still. Vulfilaich entered, but again the wicked devil growled from the background of the cavern. "May Michael trample thee under his feet, Gabriel pierce thee with his lance, Uriel dazzle thee with his

light," stammered Vulfilaich as he sought his steel and tinder at one side of the entry to the cave and then lit a torch. But again did he hear the soothing voice of the female dæmon. With the prayer of Solomon against the powers of the lower world on his lips, and the torch in his hand he pressed forwards. He then beheld the beauteous dæmon in the background rise up pale and tall; these are her dark eyes, this her black hair, and her full white arms. He stretches his hands out to her, hell is stronger than his prayers—he must possess her. But suddenly Satan in the shape of a wolf springs forward, green eyes flash on him. Vulfilaich started back. This was once more a phantasy of the evil spirit, but he had never seen it so distinctly before. "Down, wolf," now cried an imperious voice. "I knew not that this was thy place of concealment, Vulfilaich," he heard Jetta say. "Thou knowest why I am without a home, and house together with the beasts of the forests?"

Vulfilaich remained silent, still gazing on her with superstitious terror. She however forced her way past him together with her wolf into the open, and then said, "So come! if thou knowest

it not. Yesterday they treacherously murdered thy brother. Yonder by the stone of the giant was he slain, before the midnight hour. The blood which they spilt is not yet dried."

"Rothari dead!" cried the monk overcome with sudden grief. "Woe unto them, thrice woe. How long judgest and avengest thou not our blood on the inhabitants of the earth. "How much longer!" he cried, passionately raising up his hands to the dark heavens above. "Turn unto Him," he then said to Jetta, "who comes on the clouds of heaven and will require from the hypocrites all the righteous blood that was shed on earth from the blood of Abel to the blood of the son of Barachja, whom they slew between the temple and altar."

"Judge and avenge! Yea, monk, those were the words that lay on my soul and I could not find them. I am but a woman, but they have turned the heart in my breast into stone. I cannot relate to thee how that they brought me to this. My tongue would dry up within my lips, the trees and grass would wither up if I but spake it, and the moon would hide its face were it to hear it. I myself was cast down and overpressed

by the horror of the deed, 'but judge and avenge' those are the words, that the formula which dispels my torpor."

"Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord," answered the monk.

"No, monk! This vengeance is mine," cried Jetta with a shriek. "The mother whose child has been stolen, whose child has been mutilated, whose child has been even refused rest in death, so that the little spirit could not sleep when all slept in the bosom of loving mother earth, whose little soul they goaded so that it might weeping relate to them all that Justina's curiosity lusted after . . . Monk, hearest thou? Hast thou understood that? This vengeance is *mine*, and if thou art a man, lead me to Macrian. Rothari told me to him must I go. The last breath in his body was a message to the barbarian."

"Macrian lies in yonder wood together with the fathers of the hostages whom the Augustus will slay, and they debate as to how they may rescue them."

Loudly did Jetta shriek in her wild joy. "Then lead me, monk, coward, christian, messenger of God. Judge and avenge, thou art a true prophet, my

boy." She seized him by the arm and dragged him forwards whilst the wolf crept shyly and listfully by their side. Thus did they reach the Nicer. "How wilt thou cross over?" asked Vulflaich as they stood by the river. "No water can separate me from my revenge," replied Jetta and strode fearlessly into the clear cold stream, and the wolf followed in after her. As the powerful beast began swimming at her side, she slung her right arm across its neck, dividing the waters with her left. Whoever had thus seen her by the light of the stars, embracing the monster and gliding past, would never have mistrusted in the arts, in which she herself doubted since the previous day, and which she now cursed.

A mild night lies over the Wodanwald. The trees whisper in still discourse or again roar forth in mighty chorus whenever a more powerful night blast passes over them. Glowworms pursue each other like shining sparks. A group of Alemanni having a monk in their midst hastily wends its way through the wood. In front strides a woman with flowing hair, madness in her eye, followed by a mighty wolf. It is Jetta, they seek Macrian the terrible, behind whom flutter the black

ravens who ever find carrion where he has past over. Suddenly the wolf stops and gives forth a howl. He sees in front of him the glittering weapons of the German outposts. In the wood behind Mons Piri was encamped near the trunk of a mighty oak the man whom Jetta sought in order to betray Rome. The place was dry, protected by the dense foliage of the spreading tree and safe from surprise, as its lofty position commanded the surrounding neighbourhood. Nevertheless sentries were posted all round, to report in time any approach of the enemy. King Macrian had appointed this as a fitting place to meet those chieftains whose sons were held as hostages by the Romans. As the king had through cunning carried off his son from Moguntiacum, he thought it but right before declaring war to give the chieftains an opportunity of making a similar attempt. But should the attempt succeed or fail, it had been determined that the Romans must be driven out of this outlet of the valley. They had held council till deep in the night, but all proposals as to carrying off the hostages had been declared impracticable. Some had lain down, after a fruitless consultation, in deep sorrow, others in rage. Did not

by the morrow an opportunity arise for a lucky onset, it had been determined to return homewards, to summon all the kings of the entire race to a common warfare. The sun rose above the darkblue mountain range of the Wodanwald and the red morning dawn flamed above the tops of the lofty beeches, as the smothered sound of the horn summoned those refreshing themselves with sleep to the oak where lay the king. From around the bushes arose the chieftains with their followers and the warriors whom the king had brought with him. When the circle was completed a hundred spears might be numbered. By the oak stood the king, at his feet a tamed wolf, by his side a Roman woman and Vulfilaich the Christian. All eyes were fixed with curiosity on the new-comers, whose presence none of the chieftains could explain. "As the wolf in the closed stall," began the king, "sought we yesterday in vain an entrance to the prison of our sons. The night has brought us better consolation. Those that you here see are Rothari's brother and Rothari's wife. He himself lies, as my spies have reported to me, on the bier at Rosenhof, after tasting, as I had previously warned him, the trustworthiness of his allies.

They have murdered him on the Riesenstein. This morning they will burn his corpse and according to their custom gather his ashes in an urn. His widow has come to invite us as guests, so that a suite of Romans be given to the king's son on his dark road to Hel's kingdom. I explained to her, what bound our hands, and she has offered to deliver into our hands Valentinian's wife or child or both, in order to punish the empress who has wronged both her child and husband. Do we hold such a pledge, it will be easy to free your sons, nay more, perhaps then the emperor desists without war from his dishonourable intentions." A murmur of applause was the answer to the king's speech. But suspicion was also aroused and Jetta was submitted to a close cross-examination. Though she was Rothari's wife, she was also Arator's daughter. Jetta's answers were short but determined, and the deep sadness in her eyes, the rage on her pale face and the trembling lips lulled even the doubts of the most suspicious as to the earnestness of her intentions. The most of the Germans knew not Jetta's language, but the expression of a great grief is understood from one end of the world to the other, and all women over the body

of their children from the wife of the barbarian of the primeval forests to the Niobe of the Königsburg resemble one another. Whosoever looked on her, thought no more of treachery. Macrian now begged Jetta to explain her plans.

"The superior officers in the camp," said Jetta darkly, "celebrate this day a feast of Mithras in the cave of the grotto. Among them also can you find hostages in case my design on Justina fails." The leaders now joined Jetta to hold a short council. After that a common plan had been decided upon, the individual groups disappeared among the bushes.

An hour later the signal for assembly sounded among the huts on Mons Piri. Carried on with restless energy, the work prepared on the quiet rapidly neared completion. The shape of the castellum, a square rounded off at the four corners, could be plainly recognized. The fundamentals of the gates and towers already rose above the level to the height of a man, the substructure of the prætorium was almost completed. Blocks of newer stone lay ready shaped around. The two ancient bulworks of the Alemanni, the narrower and wider stonewall, which doubly surrounded the entire

top of the mountain, had been preserved as outwork.

On that day an increased activity reigned, newly incited by the emperor's visit on the day preceding. Soldiers stood working in the trenches which environed the work, others carried up earth or carted off the rubbish. Some dug in the chalk-pits, others piled stone on stone. The weapons hung in the huts, all were lightly clad, the spade-party almost half-naked. Nothing was to be heard around but the blithe kling, kling of the iron hammers, as they tapped the stone. Suddenly however a shrill cry interrupted the joyous music, but the inner ring of the old Alemannian outwork concealed from the view of the soldiers what was going on on the other side. All eyes were directed downwards; from all sides huge lances appeared above the stone rings, savage faces, battle-axes swung on high. The soldiers standing nearest to the huts rushed for their weapons. But they found themselves surrounded like beasts of the field driven into a ravine. Some are cut down by the battle-axe, the naked bodies of others are pierced through by the long German spear, the few who managed to resist were overcome after

a short resistance. On the summit of the ring stands the king, terrible to behold in his boarskin helmet, and every ten steps is placed an Alemann with his javelin, and where a swift-footed fugitive escapes from above, the spear pierces him, before that he breathless is able to reach the top of the stone-fort. Dying and groaning, the soldiers who had begun the day's work so well and zealously lie in the course of half an hour near to one another. Jetta stands close to Macrian. She turns her back to the awful spectacle and gazes with fixed eye at the mountains on the other side of the Rhenus, which divide Gallia from Germania. She it is who now has delivered up the province to the Alemanni. When the bloody work is finished, smothered signals on the horn recall the Alemanni to the side of their king. Led by Jetta, in wedge-like order, wooden shield and lance grasped tight, they carefully descend the mountain. Hidden by bushes, taking cover under the overlapping of rock, often stooping and even creeping along on its belly, the armed worm wriggled quietly down the slope till Macrian reached the wall of a garden with his guide. Jetta pushed back a secret bolt and the

armed host followed her through well cared-for walks and blooming flower-beds. A shudder seemed to run over Jetta as she stepped out on the terrace, and as the house which at one time she thought to have occupied with Rothari, lay before her. But once more does a pale child's head rise up before her mental eye, it hovers in front of her and points out the way, and as a somnambulist does she move, as if following after some face. She opens a door. A slave gazes at her in amazement, but a blow of Macrian's sword at once changes the silence of fear into the silence of death. A Roman soldier raises his weapon against the intruders. Jetta's wolf pulls him down and the thrust of a lance lays him next to his companion. Part of the men remain on guard in the garden, the others follow Macrian. Dismal sound the steps of the quietly moving warriors in the empty Atrium, the coloured shepherds and nymphs on the frescoes smile as pleasantly on the German wolves as they were wont to do on their Roman lords. The variegated fruit pieces of the mosaic pavement creak under the ponderous feet of the savages. Jetta stood still before the heavy door of a side chamber. "Here below the leaders cele-

brate this day the mysteries of their God. You will be able to capture them without blood-shed. Take the torches from the holders," she said "and have a tool ready to spring this door. Give me ten men to guard the other exit. You will find rope in yonder room wherewith to bind the prisoners. Do not begin the work before that I give a sign from below. What signal dost thou require?" Macrian handed her a small silver whistle, part of the booty of his Gallic expedition. A moment was sufficient for all to be made ready. Led by Jetta, some dozen warriors climbed down the descent, to the corner of the mountain, where concealed by some bushes a small door behind a high fountain became visible. Here Jetta halted. A shrill whistle made known to those above that this outlet also was guarded. The little party remained in breathless silence, with lances couched, carefully keeping the door in view whilst two of them faced about to watch the Nicer and Jetta herself. Suddenly staggering footsteps were heard, the door was pushed open from the inside. With face pale with terror, like to Orestes pursued by the furies, the trembling Nasica appeared. On seeing the lances, he drew back. "Seize him," cried Jetta, "he helped

to murder Rothari." Nasica tried to rush back, but urged forwards by the throng behind, he fell a prey to the laughing Germans, who gagged him and threw him on one side as if he were but an old stump. Deathly pale those coming after held out their arms in proof of their surrender. In the white dress of the priests, without weapons, many still wearing wreaths they came forth one after the other out of the narrow passage and suffered themselves to be bound. Then two more already bound were led out and behind them appeared Macrian's wild face. Bloodstains on his mantle testified to the work done by him within. Darkly did Jetta muster the faces of the prisoners. Arator and Syagrius were missing. They were attending the cremation of Rothari at Rosenhof, where Gratian caused the last rites to be performed over his friend. "You are too few in number," said Jetta coldly to Macrian, "to storm the camp. Justina is however with her son at the Zehnthof. Keep the prisoners here, I will seek the empress or capture her child. Vulfilaich, the Christian, must also remain here, he might betray us."

The prisoners were again driven down the narrow passage back to the grotto, where they

cowered on the ground opposite to the effigy of Mithras. Vulfilaich also sat among them and sadly gazed at the image of the God, whose finely chiselled face Rothari had once saved from the blows of his axe, and who after the manner of the wickedness of the dæmons, as thanks had suffered him to be slain a sacrifice at his feast.

Jetta in the mean while led through gardens and orchards three of the barbarians to the gate of the Zehnthof. Quietly did she open it. Within she heard Bissula's voice joking with Justina's child. "Years of expectation could not have given a better opportunity," said Jetta, a savage triumph glittering in her eyes. Her whole being seemed to animate itself, her bearing became severe, her expression hard and threatening. "Child for child," she murmured, "vengeance is at hand." She placed her companions behind the mighty trunks of the nut trees and with fixed look passed through the gate. Bissula, holding the little Valentinian on her knees, uttered a cry of surprise on seeing Jetta. "At last," she cried, "at last, my poor Jetta, we have all been so anxious, even the emperor sought after thee, and Justina was prepared for the worst. But I well knew,

that thou would'st come, when Rothari's body was given to the flames." The guileless German put down the child, to accompany the pale guest to the house. But Jetta took up the child and said: "Call Justina."

Bissula looked at her inquiringly. "The Augusta shall appear here before me," cried Jetta with flaming eyes, so that Bissula shaking her head hastened towards the house. "Grief has distracted her," she said to herself, but she obeyed. The child in its fright stretched out his arms towards his attendant, who had just stooped to pick up flowers for him from the ground, and now however astonished and inquisitive examined more closely the appearance of Rothari's young widow, whose inexplicable disappearance had been the theme of conversation the whole of the day previous. On seeing that the child was frightened at Jetta's silence, she raised herself mindful of her duties. Suddenly Jetta disappeared behind the gate together with the child. The nurse sprang hastily after her, but only saw how Jetta handed the child over to a barbarian. Armed men stepped out from behind the trees, whose numbers the terrified woman multiplied tenfold. Almost fainting

she rushed back to the house. At the door she met Justina who had that moment haughtily said to Bissula, "Turn her out. Were she not mad I should order the bold woman to be flogged out."

The child's nurse rushed into the house with loud shrieks. "The Alemanni! The Cæsar has been carried off!" she cried in her despair. Justina started back pale with fright. "Where is the child?" Tremblingly the nurse pointed to the gate, and like a she-wolf robbed of its young the Augusta rushed forth towards the road followed by the two women. All around was still, Jetta alone stood there with folded arms leaning against the huge trunk of an old nut tree. The nurse pointed to her: "She took him!" "My child, my child," cried Justina. Jetta smiled like unto the Medusa, whose sorrow turns to mockery. "Give me back Valentinian," shrieked Justina, "or I shall order thee to be torn to pieces with red-hot pincers." And she turned towards the house as if to summon aid. But Jetta seized her arm with an iron grasp. "See this silver whistle," she said to Justina. "One note means that yonder behind the hedge the head of thy son is to be severed from its trunk as thou didst mutilate my boy."

"Thy child was dead," gasped Justina and her teeth clattered.

"Thou didst kill it."

"I beseech thee, what shall I do? What dost thou wish? Demand what thou wilt, a property, an estate, a province, thou shalt have them all, but give me my boy."

"Listen, Augusta," said Jetta coldly. "The Alemanni hold thy child as hostage. So soon as they receive back their sons whom you treacherously retain prisoners, will thy child be given back—to me. I give him back to thee, as thou gavest me back mine. For me, the body, for thee, the head. Thou canst then make it speak with thy magic arts." Horrified the empress raised her hands to heaven, her eyes rolled. Again she turned to go to the house.

"Forget not the whistle, Augusta!" said Jetta, putting the silver plaything to her lips. The pallid woman then fell on her knees before Jetta. "Mercy, mercy!" she sobbed.

"Certainly, most gracious lady. Mercy such as thou didst show to Rothari, to Tullius, to me. Child for child, we exchange heads"—and she laughed cruelly like one of the Eumenides.

Justina groaned and writhed on the ground. "Listen well, woman," cried Jetta, contemptuously pushing away with her foot the prostrate empress as she had been wont to treat her wolf, "if within three days the hostages are not restored into our hands, the Alemanni slay thy son and throw his body to the dogs. When we receive back our German children, thou receivest from me the head of thy son, and canst teach it to speak. That is verily thy favourite amusement. And now do thou remain lying here till we are out of sight, shouldest thou rise before this, then I whistle." Thus did the cruel woman lie prostrate on the ground, trembling, shivering, despairing, whilst Jetta's step was lost to sound on the turf. After a while she ventured to look up to see whether Jetta was still in sight, but she lay alone before the gate of the Zehnthof. As if inebriated, mad with fear and grief she staggered back to the house and called for the child's nurse. The woman had disappeared. Bissula also was not to be found. Nothing was left for the empress to do, but to assemble her servants. She sent the German slaves out as spies, and promised to each freedom and princely wealth should he bring back her son. With the

others she hurried to the camp, rejoicing at finding the road still open. She then heard, that Valentinian had ridden forth in the early morning to Alta Ripa, in order not to be present during the cremation of Rothari's body, and had ordered Gratian to follow him thither. An express command was also awaiting her to retire as quickly as possible to the Munimentum, as the outbreak of a war was imminent. But how could the mother leave the spot, in which she had just been robbed of her child. As the hen runs up and down the place, where the hawk has just pounced on her chick, so did she run about the camp, addressing every soldier, as he hurried back to the barracks summoned by the tuba. Finally by the advice of her women she collected herself sufficiently to address an epistle to Valentinian, in which she weepingly prayed him to at once set free the hostages, otherwise her child would be put to death. The best rider in the camp offered himself as the bearer of the note to the emperor, Justina however hastened still half mad with grief and terror to the prætorium, to incite Arator against the Alemanni.

CHAPTER IX.

AT the very hour of the attack on the grotto, Arator and Syagrius were returning from the Columbarium where the Comes had deposited the urn containing the ashes of the son-in-law whom he himself had murdered. In silence proceeded the conspirator against Rothari's life, and the venerable old man who had been compelled against his wish to execute the sentence, side by side, till they reached the prætorium. Then only did the notarius speak: "Since the day before yesterday a written command lies here addressed to thee, ordering thee to retire to Alta Ripa, so soon as Hermogenes, whom the emperor has appointed to be thy successor, will have arrived here." Long and earnestly did the old man gaze at his foe, and then he asked: "The emperor's notarius will also be able to tell me what the cause of this strange recall may be." Syagrius smiled mockingly. "Thy too close connexion with the traitor Rothari." Arator turned pale, he felt the power of the Nemesis, but in silence he turned his back on the heartless scoffer and entered the prætorium. He

was still engaged on his preparations for handing over the duty to the newly appointed Dux militiæ, when a centurion hastily entered and reported the arrival of the Augusta in the camp. At the same moment the horns outside sounded summoning the soldiers to the ramparts against the Alemanni. The Comes hurried out, ordered the gates to be closed and himself ascended the tower of the porta Decumana to convince himself through his own inspection as to the cause of the alarm. His officers were still in the grotto, and no signal from Mons Piri answered to the sound of the tuba. Instead of this the quick eye of the long-sighted old man discerned the tall spears of the Alemanni behind the stone walls. Could the whole of the troops stationed above have been cut down? Hardly possible. As he was about to send to the Mithræum to warn the initiated, Justina approached him full of rage that his first care had not been to greet her. She considered him as the father of the traitress who had carried off her child. She overwhelmed him with reproaches, his bad precautions had rendered the ambuscade possible; she demanded of him her child at the cost of his head, from him she would know where Jetta had hidden the prince. Arator

stood speechless on hearing the wonderful tidings related by Justina concerning his vanished daughter. He had at once feared that Jetta's wild grief and eccentric mind would conceive some terrible revenge, but that related by Justina surpassed his expectations. In silence did he let the woman's torrents of rage pour down on him. "Such scenes ever take place at the time of the downfall of a royal house," he said to himself. But in the confusion which had taken place since the day previous and in the wild outburst of passions, he himself would at least like one of the ancient Romans preserve his calmness and do his duty. Thus only could he save for the empire what yet might be saved. Calmly did he gaze up the stream. From thence would the enemy come, if indeed they came. Still more embittered at his silence, the imperial megæra, no longer able to restrain her rage, seized the general by his arm and shrieked: "Answer, traitor, answer."

Then spake Arator in curt tones: "Silence! this day the question is not about thee and thy boy, but the province and Rome," and the look which he cast on her was threatening like the sharp-edged axe of the lictor. Her evil conscience

was aroused. She knew of the spiteful recall of Arator, who after that had nothing more to lose; fear seized her lest in the end the Comes might be acting in conjunction with his daughter and would profit by the hours in which the power still remained to him. Her courage left her and putting off her revenge for a more timely hour, she silently returned to the prætorium, where she found Syagrius busy sending off messengers to Valentinian. She induced the Notarius by her entreaties to send an invitation to Anakletus of Lupodunum to the camp. The Arian bishop could best serve her as intermediary with Macrian, from whom she was prepared to purchase back her child for piles of gold.

From that time on everything in the valley remained quiet. None of the men from Mons Piri demanded admittance, none from the grotto were to be seen. Under these circumstances Arator ordered the light Gallic archers, the petulantes, to skirmish out, and examine the situation. They saw at the ingress of the valley two tall horsemen on saddleless horses, who however immediately disappeared. The Romans did not dare enter into the grotto so as not to fall into an ambushade.

Another detachment who searched the plain, saw two Alemanni ride off on their small horses towards Alta Ripa. They were messengers from the chieftains sent to demand from Valentinian the release of the hostages. Nothing further was reported. The troops remained the whole of the night on duty. The fire-signals were lighted on the beacons and told to those on the other bank of the Rhenus the approach of the enemy. The tread of the rounds echoed on the walls. Justina however lay in a small chamber of the *prætorium* stretched out before a crucifix, she wept, prayed, flogged herself, acknowledged her sins and transgressions, and vowed to refrain from all magic arts, in case the crucified Saviour restored her child to her.

The following morning she found the bishop of Lupodunum at her door. The pious man was very much scared at the idea that it was intended to send him the man of peace to Macrian, but the empress left him so decidedly nothing but the choice between obedience or loss of his beloved Basilica, that he consented to be her ambassador to the Alemanni and to promise any ransom for the restoration of the child. That very same afternoon he returned excited and angry from his visit

to Macrian. An outpost had first threatened him as being a spy, then towed him with much ill-treatment up the mountains to the great Wodans-oak behind Mons Piri. Then he had, as he said, negotiated for two whole hours with the barbarians. He had not seen the child. He was under the care of a woman, had Macrian replied laughing. "With Jetta!" shrieked the horrified Justina. Macrian however vowed to hand over uninjured the child and the captive officers, continued the Bishop, so soon as the hostages had arrived from Mogontiacum into the camp of the Alemanni. Thus did Arator also hear for the first time of the fate of his men. The guard on the mountains had been slain, the officers in the grotto were in the hands of the barbarians. It was however plain that Macrian was too weak to attack and made use of the delay which he proposed to Valentinian to rouse up the tribes of the Alemanni. On this the empress determined to attempt the journey to Alta Ripa to urge on Valentinian the surrender of the hostages and to inform the emperor himself of everything. The bishop remained behind in the camp under the pretext that the road to Lupodunum was not open. Justina on the contrary

reached unassailed the gate of the Munimentum, which was immediately thrown open for the empress. But Valentinian received his weeping spouse with uncontrollable rage. Her criminality had estranged Rothari from him, her indiscretion had suffered the child to fall into the hands of the Alemanni, already had the order been given to send off the hostages on the swiftest horses to Mons Piri. In this way she herself had deprived her husband of the most effective means of crushing the enemy, of disuniting them and of attracting them to the cause of the emperor. Never before had the crooked glances of the tyrant thus looked on her, never before had he thus spoken to her. Finally he ordered her to continue her journey at once to Treviri without waiting for the child, so that she might not bring about more mischief. With a broken heart did the cruel woman embark in the gaudy galley and piloted by Ausonius glide down the stream to the mouth of the Mosella. Her companion Ausonius was likewise in the most depressed mood. The poet of fishes edible and wines potable was anxious about his Bissula, concerning whose absence none could give him any details. The thought of losing her, or

perhaps of having already lost her, brought him suddenly to the full consciousness of her merits. Already *nænia* and elegies arose to Bissula together with new erotic songs in his lively brain and he wearied the company with his praises of his fair German, who perhaps through the same right of war must now become the mate of a barbarian, as she had become the wife of the great poet and statesman Magnus Decimus Ausonius. Had the anxious husband when setting out looked back more carefully at the bank, he would have been able to see on the terrace of the garden near which the Rhene rushed past, a woman holding in her arms a child, hailing the ship and endeavouring to signal it to return. This was Bissula with the little Valentinian. But no one heeded the calls or waving cloth, so that Justina only heard on her arrival at Treviri that the child was safe. The energetic handsome German had rescued the child single-handed and by this had founded her husband's fortune and her own at the imperial court for ever.

Whilst Justina had been engaged in her passionate intercourse with Jetta before the gate of the Zehnthof, Bissula's sharp ear heard behind the bushes of the slope the cry of the wretched child

from whose mouth the rough hand of the barbarian had been removed for a moment. Bissula had lately run away in terror at the darkness of the night and when present at the horrible abominations of the Riesenstein. This day the cheery sunlight gave her the energy, her female pity the courage to pursue with swift foot the escaping barbarians, and as soon as she sighted them she addressed the soldiers in the German tongue: "Jetta sent me, I am to carry the child so that it be not frightened. The child is dying of fear, thou clumsy bear-skin. Stop, I also am a German." The three warriors did indeed stop at last with their booty in order to hear what the German woman behind them wished to say. Breathless Bissula came up and took the child who at once became quiet in her arms. "Jetta said that I was to take care of him," Bissula continued, inventing unhesitatingly. "If he dies under your rough treatment he is no longer worth anything to us, living he is worth a kingdom. Come, my sweet little man, are not those indeed naughty oafs who know not how a young Roman ought to be handled." And calmly did she proceed at the head of the party, as if none were in a greater hurry to reach

Macrianus than herself. She had soon gathered from the conversation of her companions that the child should serve as release for the Alemannian hostages, and on reaching the oak at the cross-ways of the mountains, where the king encamped, she immediately took up the word, as if she had joined herself to Jetta to obtain the freedom of her fellow-countrymen at Mogontiacum, whose names she rattled off freely. Here was Valentinian's little son, and that answered for their success, but above all others she must demand rest for the child, fitting food, and a quiet somewhat retired hut, so that the child might recover. An arbour of green twigs and wide ferns was soon built up and stretched out in the soft moss with her little charge, she whispered words of comfort and hope in its ear, till he went off calmly to sleep in her arms.

The following day came the Bishop of Lupodunum, who bitterly complained to Macrian that the men who accompanied him had handled him so roughly, although he neither served king nor emperor, but only his Lord in heaven. He added to this Justina's message and received as answer, that Valentinian had already been given to under-

stand, that he would only again see his son and the worshippers of Mithras alive on exchanging them for the hostages. The bishop had more at heart his basilica and the rich vessels presented by Justina's generosity to aid against the poverty of his congregation, than Valentinian's little son. The cunning king soon saw how matters were and took the worthy man into his confidence. He explained to him that though he would never permit the imperial Christians, the Nicæans or orthodox as they were called, to settle in his land, because they were the slaves of Rome, he had no objection to the Arians. The basilica at Lupodunum would he save from plundering, if the bishop brought it about that all who belonged to his faith should lay down their weapons, and those among them that were Germans, return quietly to their homes. The Latins on the other hand could settle down in the wasted Lupodunum, where there was still room for many. The gaunt bishop heard these words of the barbarian with intense joy and declared that he would do his best and what lay in his power to carry out the king's wishes. Willingly would he at once proclaim that peace had been declared between the people of the Christians and

the people of the Alemanni and he would restrain his followers from fighting for the Romans. As he then still asked to see the child, Macrian answered evasively that he was in the care of a careful woman. "I am not to know his place of concealment," thought the bishop, and thoroughly satisfied he turned back, and did his utmost to support Justina in her proposal of returning to Alta Ripa. But the child was indeed no longer in Macrian's power, even when the canny barbarian was valuing him through Anakletus as a pledge for the return of the hostages.

Bissula had awaited with fear and trembling Jetta's return that evening, as her deceptions must then be all brought to light. But Jetta had remained behind in the villa near the mithraic grotto and there passed the night with her head pillowed on the wolf. Her thirst for revenge had been assuaged by the abduction of the child. She had besides this never thought of carrying out her bloody threats. On the contrary she had laid herself down to rest in the vicinity of the Mithras grotto, to protect if necessary the prisoners from the violence of the barbarians. Thus Bissula's guiles were not laid bare and it never struck any-

body to watch the stranger who herself had given the king's son into their hands. But the following morning when the Alemanni looked into the hut, both woman and child had disappeared. All that Macrian could do under those circumstances was to keep his loss concealed so long as possible. He confirmed Anakletus, who confirmed Justina, who herself confirmed Valentinian in the belief that the child was still in the hands of the barbarians. Thus the release of the young chieftains was expedited through special messengers, and at the very hour in which Valentinian received his son from Bissula's hands, the sons of the Alemanni liberated at Mogontiacum were galloping on swift horses towards their own free mountains. In spite of this Valentinian promised the courageous rescuer to richly reward her husband for the services rendered by his wife. He advised her, however, to keep as a profound secret a procedure which redounded so little to the honour of the imperial house. Bissula's cunning worked indeed in the worst possible manner for those Romans who had fallen into Macrian's hands. For as Valentinian had abducted his child instead of waiting for the exchange of hostages, Macrian was released from

his promise and enraged at the trick which the faithless Romans had once more played on him, he set aside the prisoners for sacrifices at the coming feast of victory.

Anxious days now followed for the inhabitants of the small Roman towns on the Nicer and Rhenus between the declaration of war and the first encounter. But on the other hand the dark Wodanwald became full of life. From all sides did the hosts of the Alemanni climb up the mountain paths. From the south the Lentienses and Brisgaves had hurried up; the Juthunges and Hermundures had climbed down into the valley of the Nicer and united themselves with Macrian's Buccinobantes from the north. Every hour the lights in the watch-towers announced the arrival of fresh comers, till finally the bright flames were extinguished, as the towers fell into the hands of the enemy. For the last time had they spoken their mute Roman speech on this side of the Rhenus. At night however the valley of the Nicer was lighted up by the flames, in which the wooden edifice on Mons Valentiniani fell with a loud crash.

The day which bore the decision in its bosom broke with a lurid troubled morning dawn and

the rising sun found Arator ready on the walls to encourage the soldiers and watch for the enemy. The insignia of the barbarians were well known to him. Yonder rose Macrian's spear with its terrible boar's head, next he beheld the spreading antlers borne before the hosts of the Suevi; glaringly painted swords and golden skulls of horses saw he reflected and his brow clouded over. "Have then the woods of Germany," he said "opened all their gaps to spue out at the same time Juthunges, Hermundures, Lentienses, Brisgaves and Buccinobantes!" But he took care to present a bold front to his own troops. He could not promise his men a speedy succour, for the emperor did not wish to weaken the garrison of Alta Ripa. The army would assemble at Mogontiacum, so that through an inroad into their most northerly province the Alemanni might be compelled to retire. The troops knew that they were intended for sacrifice; such was the spiritual consolation, which the Bishop of Lupodunum going from hut to hut had dealt out to his disciples. "Shall we suffer our newly built basilica at Lupodunum to be again plundered?" Arator heard the bishop whisper to a soldier. He smote on his sword, but he already felt himself

too weak to turn out the traitor, for he feared a mutiny among the Christians. Likewise he could not say that the priest had incited a tumult. The troops were drawn up, the red vexilla fluttered in the breeze, the dragon ensign of the legion glittered in the sun, helms and shields glistened, but no cheer, no sign of eagerness for the fray greeted the general. Here and there the old warrior addressed the men, but he felt that his words returned back empty to him. Moreover he ever saw close behind him Syagrius' red beard and huge nose under which the lips curled sarcastically. "Resistance is vain," at last broke in the notarius. "By this evening there remains not one stone on the other. Treat for a free march out."

"Till Hermogenes arrives, do I command here," said Arator sharply, "it is not the custom of Rome to surrender a camp to the barbarians without a blow of the sword." The notarius shrugged his shoulders and joined the bishop. "This Gaul who plays the part of the last of the Romans," he murmured between his teeth. Arator mounted the wall, which was joined from inside to the fortifications, to await the enemy. Round this rampart ran a double trench, about twenty

yards in breadth, that is as wide as a soldier from above could hurl his pilum with certainty of aim. The battlements of the parapet were high enough to completely shield a man and the opening between them sufficiently large to permit of the free handling of every weapon. The four corners of the castrum were rounded off and protruded well out so as to flank the sides of the ramparts. Here stood the catapults, and a centurion was in command. On each of the four sides the ground between had a gate, defended by two square towers. Here the trenches were dammed over. The porta prætoria faced the smaller side towards the east, whence the attack was to be expected. It was narrow and fortified more strongly. Opposite to this, facing the plain of the Rhenus opened the wide double gate the porta decumana, over whose middle pillars the statue of Mercurius Cimbrius had been placed, till overthrown one night by the Christian soldiers. Arator went himself to the porta prætoria which was most immediately threatened. The soldiers stood behind the parapets, pilum or sling in hand, ready to greet the enemy with the sharp point and heavy leaden missiles. The enemy were evidently waiting for more reinforcements

The attack did not begin, and one only saw from the felling of trees on the mountains that Macrian was preparing material for storming. Hour after hour stood the soldier on the walls and the sun poured down its merciless rays on the heavily armed men, whilst the enemy outside rested in the wood from their march and recruited their strength. At last as the evening broke in, when the wearied sentries no longer expected it, a fearful sound like the roaring of some huge monster suddenly sounded in the vicinity of the camp. All rushed up to the battlements and gazed in the direction from which the sound proceeded. In the twilight behind a tree they saw Macrian who sounded the cry of battle in the hollow brazen shield held up to his mouth. Suddenly the valley and the heights seemed alive. The buzzing war-song of the Germans was heard slowly rising, the measured striking of the wooden shields, the song of battle fearfully increasing to a howl, which now sounded as if the waves of the sea were beating up against the hollow rocks. On both sides of the camp weapons gleamed through the bushes. They descended Mons Piri in eight wedge-shaped detachments, formed up on the street and marched

directly towards the gate. In front strode huge men bearing bundles of brushwood as shields, behind them others dragging whole trees and bare trunks. Having reached within length of the pilum they sprang forwards with mighty bounds; at one throw their bundles lay in the trenches, the beams were thrust over those and the spaces between filled with more brush. An occasional missile fell here and there among them hurled by the soldier from behind the parapets, but new reinforcements ever kept coming up with bundles of brush, baskets and sandbags, re-placing the breaking-up ranks, and as the sun sank the trench at this place was filled. Again the buzzing of the battle-song was to be heard gradually increasing till it finally sounded like the howling of a tempest. The attack began. Arator stepped up to the foremost parapet near the soldier, who, exposed the most, held the pilum firmly in his hand. He heard how the enemy below were preparing to storm. The man poised the missile ready to hurl it, but suddenly grounded it with an expression of terror. "Why dost thou hesitate," asked Arator in astonishment. "Mercurius Cimbrius be my aid," stammered the man, "I see a woman.

In front comes thy daughter with hair flying, a wolf at her side. It is Jetta, widow of Rothari, whose blood thou didst spill." And with a sign of horror the soldier stepped back. Arator seized the javelin from his hand. Balancing himself on the parapet he raised himself to half his height above the wall and aimed at Jetta. "She shall know whose weapon pierces her," he said, drawing himself up, then he fell, hit by an arrow, head downwards from the railing. "Treachery!" was cried at the same moment. "The Christians are marching off." Surprised the warriors looked backwards. The northern door which had not been attacked, was thrown open. A long procession of spearless men left the camp. They carried their shields like knapsacks on their back, and their swords were sheathed. They took sack and pack with them, a certain sign that a preconcerted agreement had taken place. In front marched the bishop, holding before him as church banner a white sail waving from a cross-piece and near him walked the notarius in the dress of the forum without weapons. They now sang the church hymn "Shepherd of the kingly herd." There they met Macrian on horse-back, who spake with Anakletus and then the

procession moved off towards Lupodunum. At that moment the walls creaked under the footsteps of the defenders of the eastern door. The Alemanni battered it with long trunks of trees. The battlements shook and fell. Here also did the soldiers lay down their arms and rushed down towards the prætorium, which Macrian had already entered and disarmed the Romans. Only the outwork on the other side of the bridge remained in the hands of the troops and the planted bull ensign of the cohort showed that this handful preferred death to dishonour. When Arator recovered his senses, he found himself on the banks of the Nicer, where Vulfilaich was engaged cooling his brows. Behind him unseen by the dying man crouched his daughter near her wolf. In the distance the monotonous hymn might yet be heard:

“Curb of the unruly colt,
Wing of the never erring bird,
Shepherd of the kingly herd,
Lead on thine own, thy children raise
To holy song and heart-felt praise.”

Vulfilaich knelt at the side of the dying man. “Forget now,” he whispered, “the earthly gates and walls which were entrusted to thee. Climb upwards

to the higher Jerusalem, number her towns, look on her walls, admire her palaces, so that thou mayest speak of them to thy soul." At that the dying man broke into a yell of laughter. "Is it true that in your heaven souls cast green or blue shadows?" he asked mockingly. "There you cannot want me, for my soul is black from all the treachery my eyes have seen. Rejoice, monk. Your day is at hand. Whimper your prayers, kneel before bones, do signs and wonders. The day of light is at an end, the day of lies begins. The priest reigns in the camp, and the last sound that greeted Arator's ear, was that Roman soldiers sang the song of Him crucified and marched off led by a priest, whilst the barbarian stormed his castrum, and the enemy bellowed his battle-song before the gates. Woe, woe to Rome."

"Yea, woe to the mighty Babylon," joined in Vulfilaich. "The hour of judgment has struck. Ere another year passes away her walls will crumble like the walls of thy camp."

"Good, good, my son," said the dying man, and it seemed as if the silent old man's long suppressed desire of communication suddenly burst all bonds in the hour of death, so did the usually

firmly closed mouth pour forth its evil words. "Prophecy only the worst, my good boy, and thou wilt be right for the greater part. For twenty years have I been looking on at the sorry sight and I tell thee: all is possible, and the most foolish is probable. I saw an emperor who could have been a Hercules, but who sacrificed his best friends to an Omphale. A hero, to whom a defeat was preferable to a victory, in which he himself did not fight, a tyrant who murders his most trusty servants, and only confides in cowards." At that moment Arator heard Jetta weeping. Her own obstinate grief gave way before her father's rage and for the first time she was able to weep. Arator indignantly turned his head in her direction. "Art thou here, thou mad one," he angrily cried, "thou who played in person the Roma Dea, and nevertheless ran to the barbarians, so soon as Rome demanded thy husband's life."

"What had Rothari done to you that you slew him?" sobbed Jetta in bitterest grief.

The dying man raised himself, his expression became milder and a gleam of pity and fatherly love shone clearly in his eye. "I have done thee a great injury, my child," he said gently, "which

was not easy even for me. The Augustus had promised me Rothari's life in case he vowed to live in peace with Rome. Had I known that this was all lying and deception, I should not have been present at the sacrifice. After that Statius and Syagrius had begun the treachery, we could no longer think of peace between Rothari and ourselves. To bind him was impossible, there are too many Germans in the camp. To set him at liberty was destruction, for he had now a perfect right to fight against us. He knew all our weaknesses, he knew how empty our store-houses were, he knew the number of our troops, the incapacity of our leaders, all the entrances to our strongholds, the thickness of the walls and the breaches in the ramparts. Two weeks after that he had drawn the sword, were we under his feet. All this appeared before my soul at that moment as if illumined by a flash of lightening. 'He must not leave this place,' something said within me. So I raised my axe and struck him down like a victim for the sacrifice, and afterwards mourned for him as for a son. Never did I love a man as I loved him, I have wept only once and that was on his account and thine, my poor Jetta." Again

he heard behind him the deep sobs of his child and continued in a milder tone: "Be composed, my daughter! Thou art not responsible for the destruction of our work. We have not acted honourably, therefore do we perish." Lightly weeping did Jetta stoop over the dying man and attempt to withdraw the arrow out of his breast. "Pull not the iron out," he said, "otherwise I bleed to death and I have still much to say to thee. Return to Rome."

Jetta sighed aloud and rejected this her father's legacy with a movement of horror. "They will erect a triumphal arch for me," she said bitterly, "for delivering up their camp. Dost thou not hear the swelling sound of the battle song? Now the Brigsaves storm the outworks. Gaius holds it. Poor fellows, why did not you also run behind the Bishop. See how the flames lick at the towers."

Painfully did Arator raise his head to see what the new alarm portended. Clear as day lay the valley, and the mountains gleamed with a yellow light, the reflection of burning houses, towers, palisades, and the Nicer flowed red as a river of fire in Hades. As if the earth divided and Hel's fire ascended to heaven, so did the straw huts of the soldiers blaze, and the wind carried the burning

thatch like meteors. "See there, the farms are also burning," said Arator with bitter mockery, "here the villa where stood thy bridal couch, there whirl the Babylonian carpets and Persian curtains like a rain of ashes in the air. See the Zehnthof, how the straw lights and the hay, behind there also a new pillar of smoke, that must be our dwelling. Farewell, statues and urns, marble and roses. — Such as those could you not create, monk, and it is well that you destroy them, so that people may not have before their eyes what you are and what were. Farewell, Jetta, Rome's day is over. Warriors in sheepskin and horse hair, and monks like this one are building up the new world. I thank the gods that they take me off at the right hour." Jetta held his head and drew up his body higher.

"What wilt thou do, alone, as I leave thee behind in this world," he spoke whisperingly and fixed his eyes with an expression of fatherly care on the pale beauteous face that hung over him. "I will watch over the ashes of my husband and my child," said she gently, "and thy ashes, O my father. I will sit a stranger in the valley which I love since my soul awoke to an inner life. I will prove to the barbarians that all Romans are not thieves

and murderers." Arator answered nothing; the old man bowed his head and with a strong hand pulled the arrow out of his breast and gazed at the gently trickling red brook in which his life ran down into the cold waves of the river.

The fire in the camp and in the villages on both sides of the river died out. The pillars of smoke waved on this side and on that like gigantic spectres in the wind, above however the heaven turned blue and the eternal stars twinkled once more down on the black stream as Jetta sat by her father's corpse.

The whole of her mistaken life passed before her in that hour like the waters which flowed past her. What she had once called Rome in all the fervour of pure maidenhood, loved as Rome, the great, the beautiful, the true, she still loved, oh, that she had never loved anything else! But she was determined never to return to her people. However much she might have erred and strayed she would not stand before the judgment seat of Valentinian and Justina. Neither would she avenge herself more. The grief, which even yesterday had nearly driven her to desperation, had after the horrors of the day lost its sting. Where so

much misery cried unto heaven, her own pain seemed easier to bear. She arose with the intention of doing her best to prevent further bloodshed and to heal the wounds as far as she could. But for the present she had a duty to perform here. Her father's body should not be left to the savageness of the barbarians, nor should the birds of the Wodanwald bear away his hacked limbs. She looked around for Vulfilaich, whether he would help her in her sacred work. But hurt at Arator's words the monk had disappeared; only the wolf had remained with her. So she set to the hard work by herself. She loosened the soft sand with Arator's sword and then seized a shield which a fugitive had thrown away, to dig a grave. The wolf watched her proceedings with its clever eyes and on her leaving off exhausted for a moment, the powerful animal sprang into the newly begun grave and under his strong paws the sand flew on all sides, so that she only required to finish it off. Then she took up Arator's body and laid it in the grave. Soon she had piled up a sand heap above him with the shield, so that he might pass for buried according to the decree of the inferi; and to prevent in autumn the overflowing river to

wash him out and carry him along. When the morning dawned she let her earnest black eyes wander around the valley. She saw burned down houses and only a stratum of smoke told where yesterday the camp had stood. Alone the middle arch of the bridge remained, the garrison had torn down the arches on the left side, on the right they had been destroyed by fire. On the other hand Jetta's blockhouse on the Bühl stood uninjured. The barbarians had raged against Roman walls, the huts of the Alemann had escaped their wrath. But thither Jetta could not return. She could not re-enter the scene of her short joy and deepest grief, where wandered the grim spectre of her husband, and where the bleeding head of her child stared at her from every corner. Even now she had still to bury her face in her hands, and stood as if cramped by convulsions when she thought of the dread deed. There must exist some other place of concealment in these mountains rich in hollows, where she might be safe. She remembered the cave in the wood in which she had once before taken refuge. There was she alone, there no curiosity, no rapacity disturbed her. There she could ponder in still seclusion, what

bent she would give to her present life, since the past resembled a broken vessel of sacrifice choked up by earth. Grave but resigned she arose, called the wolf to her and the astonished Alemannian sentries saw the powerful sorceress, who had rendered their path to victory so easy, striding into the waters, and holding on to the gray beast of the woods swim over to the other side of the river. With a cold face she passed by the abandoned burnt down places on the other bank towards the wood, where she disappeared from the gaze of the Alemanni.

CHAPTER IX.

Jetta found her cavern in the same condition in which she had left it. The wolf ran into the grotto before her sniffing at the provisions which Vulfilaich had stored up and looking about to see whether an enemy, perhaps the monk, was concealed in the background. But the crypta of the mountain only known to the subterranean powers was empty and Jetta laid herself down, whilst the wolf stretched itself out before the entrance as guard. Many savage scenes of battle took place in the valley beneath which a kindly sleep concealed from Jetta's eyes. She only awoke as the rays of the evening sun penetrated deeper into the cave and a mild breeze cooled her hot temples. Sadly did she raise herself up, to think over the new condition in which she now found herself. What she had done in the last days, she herself no longer understood. She had been as the arrow, shot from the bow, but bent by a higher power. She had been impelled by the horrid thirst for vengeance for her husband, for her child, urged on by the dim idea, that the murderers

who had spilled Rothari's blood were no longer worthy to live on the earth which his foot had trodden, his sword defended, this valley which she had loved from her youth upwards. She had now satisfied her just rage and fulfilled her mission. She compared herself to a broken gift, fit for nothing else than now to be thrown with other fragments. What was now to become of her she knew not. Not that she feared the barbarians. Macrian would let her depart unhurt, she knew that, but where to? He would not banish her either, but why should she live in the country of her enemies. What object in life now remained for her, now that she was no longer daughter, wife, mother, and that Rome had cast her out. There remained no longer any work for her to do. That most sublime and sacred cause for living, which men called duty, fate had withdrawn from her. She felt that her days would spin out, but life seemed to her gray and colourless. The visions of a great mission, which had once supported her were dispelled. Up to that hour she had herself enlightened the most usual events of life with the mystic glow of belief. But a coarse blow had knocked out of her hand the red glass by which

even stone and dust glowed like fire. She saw things lying bare before her and a disgust to existence came over her. Only one feeling existed within her after all the fearful excitements of the last days, so strongly that it took the form of a wish, that was the necessity for quiet and rest, the wish of being alone. Whether she could remain here in solitude as Vulfilaich had formerly done, of that she thought not, she was satisfied at being in solitude for the time being. Future and past were all one to her. The blows and agitations had been so strong that it seemed to her as if all will and thought in her had been destroyed and would never work again. In the very place that she now was, did she find herself most satisfied in this mood. "I am like a stone," she sighed, "and lie wherever fate has thrown me." In this green nook she was at least safe from the hated face of man. Her cavern was a protected corner of the earth, she could hide herself here, till she was capable of forming a plan or till some outside power rendered her determination unnecessary and drove her further. As far as her wearied senses were capable of forming a thought, the wish not to move from this place where her hus-

band and child had died filled her. "Who knows," she thought, "whether the spirits of the departed are suffered to follow us even from afar. Perhaps are they compelled to hover around the place where they breathed out their last sigh. How sad if the spirits of father and child floated about here and found me not." It had not been granted to her to pour out the cup of the dead on the face of the earth, where Arator rested, or to sprinkle the sweet mixture of milk, wine and honey from the golden-handled pitcher on Rothari's pyre, or weave the cut-off locks around his funeral urn. But she would remain near to them and dedicate to those below the offering of her tears. She had not yet considered the material conditions of such a life. She knew that a spring bubbled close at hand, a couch of leaves and moss was easily made, and she could trust to the earth for roots and berries. Should her delicate body not be able to stand such a life, then was it all the better.

Hour after hour had elapsed in this melancholy brooding, when she finally was startled by steps approaching from the mountain. By the dim light she could not immediately recognise the newcomer, though it must be a friend, for the wolf

accompanied him and sprang around in front of him. It was the faithful Lupicinus who greeted her sadly and confusedly. He and all the other Alemannian servants had hailed Jetta's deed with enthusiasm. She had avenged her husband, that was a motive that these simple souls could understand. It was all the same to Lupicinus whether Romans or Alemanni governed in the valleys of his home; it was now as it had been during his youthful days and he was satisfied. It was his opinion that the domina would return to the Bühl and supported by her faithful servants manage the property.

He began by praising the sagacity of the animal who had pointed him out the way to his fugitive mistress. The wolf had found him in the stables and had acted in the most curious manner. It had kept running on a bit in front and then returned and howled piteously. Finally it had become plain to Lupicinus that the beast wished him to follow. Thus he had discovered Jetta's place of concealment and he believed that he could assure his mistress that she could again inhabit her house with safety. The Germans would not even oppose her departure with all her properties. But Jetta declared that she would not quit her asylum till peace was

restored. Lupicinus understood this not, he pledged his life that she would be safe. He saw not indeed the shadows which in that house clung to all the walls, or gazed at her from all the corners, but when he remarked the gesture of horror, which caused her eye to distend and her cheek to turn pale, he felt that there was now some secret which he dared not touch upon and silently he submitted. Without waiting for orders he came back after a time with bread and milk. He brought fresh clean straw which still exhaled the perfume of the field, he brought blankets and provisions, and before leaving Jetta again alone, he lit up a fire and showed his mistress how she must cover the coal with ashes to ever be able to awake a fresh flame. He now appeared daily to care for Jetta, whilst the other inhabitants of the Bühl remained strictly at a distance, receiving the orders from Lupicinus which he gave in his mistress' name. Jetta soon felt herself stronger and more healthy by this cave life. Her mind recovered its former elasticity and she listened attentively to the reports of the faithful servant, as he related to her the doings of the Alemanni and the progress of the war.

The call to arms went northwards, as Valentinian gathered an army together at Mogontiacum, so as to make ready for an attack on the most secure home of the Alemanni. But nothing came of it. Overreaching counsellors represented to Valentinian that he could make his opponent Macrian captive, whose stay in Aquæ Mattiacæ was known in the Roman camp through spies. Quickly did the army cross over the Rhene and the infantry penetrated within the valleys of the Taunus range. Here the emperor himself came upon a troop of jugglers, who were hastening from the court of the king to that of another prince, so as to amuse the barbarians by their tricks and offer well-trained slaves for sale. Valentinian ordered them to perform before him and as a reward for the amusement which they had afforded to him he hung them up in a line, so that the Germans should not hear of his approach through any vagrant. But this cruel deed missed its purport. The soldiers plundered and maltreated the farms; in the evening the reflection of the huts set on fire rose in the sky and warned Macrian. The attempt had failed. The emperor returned raging to Treviri. He appeared to his quaking

court like a lion wildly snapping at the air, after that its prey has escaped.

In the mean time Jetta, from whose beautiful hands the Augustus had at one time so willingly received the first wreath after every victory, sat forgotten in her cavern by him and by the rest of the world. Whoever settles down among the beasts of the fields without injuring them, soon becomes their friend. The forsaken woman who housed like the foxes in a hole, like the birds in a nest, soon experienced this. First did the confiding finches pick up the crumbs from her meals, looking at her from one side out of their clever little eyes and then chirping their thanks. Yellow-beaked blackbirds hopped out of the bushes and examined the strange guest with curiosity. Jetta loved their deep chest note and accustomed them to her presence with the bread which Lupicinus daily brought her. Soon browsing deer stepped slowly over the nearest meadow and festive hares danced over the grass at setting sun. Harmless snakes were attracted by the warmth of the cavern, and an owl which hated the sun-light returned to its rock nook, out of which its eyes glowed like burning lamps, whilst the sorceress sat at the

entrance of the cave surrounded by her animals. At times the wolf's eyes rolled when the hares ventured out too boldly on the meadow and wagged their long ears, or when a deer stretched its head from out of the bushes and looked at them out of its soft dark eyes. Then the wolf would angrily raise its head, but the slight pressure of Jetta's foot or a reproving word sufficed to make it crouch down again, so that soon the timid animals looked on it as one of themselves. He considered himself free of an evening, so he swam across the Nicer and began once more hunting in his former preserves. When he came back after his bath Jetta called him a clever animal and stroked his thick coat, which he much liked. After the inhabitants of the woods came men more suspicious and shy to visit the cavern. For destruction and confusion did not long visit the blooming slopes. The scattered population whose flight across the Rheneus had not succeeded returned after a few days to the ruins of the villages on both banks of the Nicer. One clear summer's day the joyous shouts of the Germans sounded over the plain. Accompanied by infantry and cavalry came in small carts, heavy, square bodies groaning

on four massive wheels, the wives and children of an Alemannian tribe, to settle down in their newly acquired dwelling. Jetta could see on the Giant's stone the smoke of the sacrificial flame, with which they took possession of their new abode. The sound of the drums beaten by the priestesses filled the valley. Amidst "heilo and sigo" were the shield of arms of the German kings fastened to the old beech stems, and whilst drums and horns sounded through the woods, the chieftains laid the crests of their tribes, horrible snakes, dragons, boar-heads, and deer antlers on the Giant's stone to be cared for by the aged priestess, who settled herself in a block-house near the stone, together with her slaves and maidens. A large wheel over which a cow-hide had been spread was then rolled up. The old woman beat this drum in a continuous monotonous time, whilst the horns of mead and the pitchers filled with barley juice passed from hand to hand. Then they all crossed over to the other side, where they immediately built their huts in the ring on the mountain. Only the priestess remained in the sacred grove.

To Jetta these barbaric sounds which pierced

upwards from the valley even to her were a source of deep grief, she retired deep into her cavern so as not to hear the hated tones. Had she then consecrated this valley to the gods of Rome, that now these savages of the Wodanwald should drive away with their hideous noise the good genii? No, she would remain and fight for the ancient gods who now had no other priestess in these mountains than the daughter of Arator. But for many a day did she sit there unmolested and undisturbed in her solitude and only the faithful Lupicinus reported to her what took place lower down. Macrian's strict orders had ensured the Bühl as Jetta's property from every attack and the serfs still awaited her return.

The Alemannian ring on Mons Piri had been again restored and there had the people settled down for a time among the ruins of the newly begun castellum. Soon however dark log-houses arose from among the bushes, such as Jetta had formerly seen in the marcian wood. The forest was burnt down in streaks and diligent hands sowed the winter crop in the sart. Jetta, though in no way molested, looked with displeasure on these innovations. She was still occupied with

herself and with her past, like Iphigeneia consuming away in a weeping never to be wept out. The cooing of the wood-pigeon in the trees, the chirping of the cricket in the meadows were the only living sounds around her and agreed with her saddened mind. Seldom it was that an Ale-mannian woman gathering wood or children picking berries gazed at her shyly from a distance. They looked upon the tall handsome woman with the serious pale face as a sorceress whom even the king feared. It was whispered that she herself had offered up her only child to the dread Hel, so as to discover all the secrets and treasures hidden under the green turf. As she sat before her cavern with her wolf at her feet, the eyes of the owl glaring in the background, even the most courageous man was terrified, and murmuring Donar's blessing the dismayed wanderer rapidly disappeared among the bushes. When finally a watchman, as he made his rounds, saw the strange woman in the clear moonlight wandering as in a dream on precipitous sandstone rocks, Jetta's reputation as a sorceress was established. When during their leisure hours the new settlers gathered together on the banks of the Nicer for a chat, then was

related in low tones, how the children who watched the horses on the slope of the hills had seen the strange woman wandering like a spectre in the woods at night, weeping, moaning and wringing her hands as she went, so that it was quite sad to see her. With a secret dread they looked up of an evening towards the flickering red light which shone down through the bushes out of the cavern from the mountain above. "She is now pondering over new incantations," whispered the women to one another, "brewing evil potions from poisonous hemlock, and speaking with the sorcerers who come to her borne on the wings of the nightwind." Soon quite a collection of myths environed Jetta. A dragon, so related the children when on the pastures, had once dwelt in the cavern. She sang it entrancingly to sleep and then with a knife separated its blue head from its slender red throat, so as to succeed to its cavern and treasures. Others had themselves seen how with her magic songs she drew the moon down from the heavens so that it stood over her precipice, and how she stretched out her hand and fetched something out of the cave of the moon, so that the moonlight still clung silvery to her fingers.

"I know what she lives upon," said a red-cheeked boy, who was considered the most courageous of the small crowd who watched the horses near the Nicer. "As she slept I crept into her cavern. Small bones were strewed around which her wolf gnawed, and I saw many heads of children on one side, which caused me to make off as fast as I could."

Thus did horror surround Jetta's cavern and guard her silent solitude. She rejoiced at the ban which the superstition of the barbarians had drawn around her. For her own desire was to remain forgotten. She was satisfied to hear nothing of the world which had injured her and to think of those better days in which she had ever believed that she was of importance to the empire and to the gods.

One day however the report given to her by Lupicinus startled her out of her brooding, the festival of the victory of the Alemanni was to be soon celebrated. On the same day on which the Germans were wont to light the fire to celebrate the demise of Baldur the god of spring slain by the summer heat, Macrian would also sacrifice the

prisoners who had fallen into his hands. "Many of our old friends," said Lupicinus sadly, "will be slain on the Riesenstein; the brave Gaius and thy cousins Statius and Naşica are among them."

Jetta arose horrified. All her indifference, in which she had believed herself to be dead to the world had disappeared at a blow. A plain duty arose before her and called for her aid. She would put an end to this terrible war and would save the victims for whom the priestess on the Riesenstein had already whetted her knife. She examined Lupicinus strictly as to the king's abode and determined on taking necessary measures.

On the night previous horrible noises were to be heard in the wood. Strange footsteps had crossed the wood, Jetta's wolf howled angrily and the melancholy hooting of her owl more than once cut her to the quick. At last the morning broke and clouds red as blood stood over the dark blue mountains of the Wodanwald. By the sacrificial stone near the priestess' hut sat Hortari, the king's son, and a gray-bearded old warrior. The king's son, whom we have already met with on the stone ring of the Heiligen Berg, guarded against

the morning air, by walking up and down. The hood of the wolfskin which fluttered around his shoulders thrown back, left the head with the long fair hair free and the young face reddened by the fresh wind, looked pleasantly on his older companion. The old man wrapped himself up closely in his buffalo-skin and gazed with pleasure at the handsome boy. Those two, the eldest and the youngest in Macrian's suite had kept watch over the battle insignia of their people. Shields woven out of willows, on which were painted the staring crests of the tribes hung on the old trunks. Here and there bleached a horse's skull from the last sacrifice. In the hut might be heard the priestess' imperious voice, and the getting together of the sacrificial implements. This uncanny occupation did not seem to disturb the conversation of the two guards. They shortened the time by asking riddles and the old Wulf was enjoyed at the good schooling of the king's son, who never was at a loss for an answer. Hortari had already guessed that women had no beards, mountains no roots and a cat's tread no sound. But now the old man said: "Now, clever, this is what I wanted to ask thee:

I should like to have
What I yesterday had,
Knowest thou, what it is?
It loosens the tongue,
It lames the speech
And brings to silence."

Immediately Hortari answered:

"A goodly drink
It loosens the tongue,
But when overdone
It lames the speech
And brings one to silence."

Again the old man said: "Now, clever, this
is what I would ask of thee:

What was the wonder
That I saw yonder?
It had its face
Deep under the earth,
Whilst now the sun
Its feet did warm."

Hortari answered:

"Thou sawest indeed grow
The onion in the ground,

The head in the earth,
Whilst then the sun
Did warm the feet."

The old man laughed and then asked once more: "Now, clever, this is what I would ask thee:

Four go,
Four hang,
Two ward off the dogs,
One hangs behind,
And all makes an animal."

Hortari thought a while and then said:

"It is a cow,
Which goes on four legs,
Four dugs hang low,
With two horns she wards off,
Her tail hangs down."

And once more Wulf began: "Now, clever, this is what I would ask of thee:

What was the wonder that I saw outside
With ten tongues and ten eyes,
With forty feet it went on all-fours
Slowly about."

Hortari knew that also:

“A sow it is bearing
Of young ones ten,
She drags herself slowly
Around the court.”

“Thou wilt become a valiant Sagaman (reader of riddles),” laughed the gray-headed Wulf, “if thou already decipherest riddles and sayings like an old warrior. Now however the sun rises yonder over the precipice, see how the river sparkles like the silver scales with which the Nix adorns herself, now set the horn to thy month, that they may shake off sleep and come to the sacrifice.” On that Hortari sprang towards a tree, seized a twisted buffalo horn hanging there and let loud sounds echo over the green wood. From the hut the smothered beat of the priestess’ drum answered, as she let the stick fall in slow measure on the stretched cowhide.

Soon the sacred grove became alive. Young warriors with light spears came up. Their fair hair was rolled up with care in large knots, but a cloth round their loins and a sheepskin on their backs was their only clothing. Others came wear-

ing shirts and breeches of deer-leather, other in scale armor, others in Roman accoutrements taken on the battle-field. Finally Macrian appeared likewise terrible to behold in the helmet worked out of the head of a boar; white gleamed the tusks at the sides and red sparkled the agates from the slit eye-balls of the skinned beast. Hortari stepped up to one side and on the other stood Sunno the officiant, a sinister-looking old man whose long full white beard distinguished him from the mustachioed warriors around. The white fillets and oaken wreath marked him out to be a priest and he ordered the slaves to lead out the prisoners. Out of the door of the hut first came forth the old priestess with bare feet, her delicate white garments held up by golden spangles, a brass girdle around her loins and the heavy oak wreath round her gray hair. Following her came with arms bound behind their backs a dozen prisoners, Nasica and Statius in front, who would have fallen down through fright and weakness had not the young Vulfilaich held them up and encouraged them, holding at times a cross for them to kiss. This conversion had been the work of the last weeks, in which he had faithfully stood by the side of

the prisoners. But where was now the pride of the haughty Nasica, where the pot-belly of the insolent Statius? As poor, half-starved men quaking with fear did they stand before the king who mustered them with a cold indifferent glance. The priestess now took the axe from the hand of a slave and began to murmur sentences over it whilst the sun rising higher cast its first rays on the Riesenstein. Whilst the Alemanni standing around awaited with impatience the spectacle of which they had been so long deprived, a disturbance arose in the background. The king saw his men give way in evident terror. Drawn up to her full height in dazzling white garment, the long loosened locks fastened backwards by a golden circlet, Jetta stood in front of the prisoners and with great majesty raised her warning hand and said in her deep tones: "I am she, king Macrian, to whom thou owest thy rapid victory. I am come to demand my share of the booty."

The king gazed at the handsome, well draped woman with a look of deep admiration. "Willingly," he said, "would the people have assigned booty to the prophetess and princess who aided us, but she

disappeared, so we divided and what lot assigned to free men, that can the king not require back."

"Then give me these," cried Jetta hastily, spreading her arms protectingly over the kneeling prisoners, on whose pale cheeks suddenly returned the ruddy hue of life and hope. Again Jetta spake in her full rich tones, raising at the same time her hand warningly towards Macrian: "Tears hast thou sufficiently sown, proud German. See to it that the crop of revenge does not spring from them. You German warriors, think you that that the land will bring you bread and wine, that you fertilise with salt tears and red blood? Nettles will it bear and stinging vipers and the dragon brood of war. Set free the prisoners, that is the first step towards peace with Rome. These here, Statius and Nasica, are related to Valentinian and to me; they will mediate for peace between you and Rome, or voluntarily return into captivity."

A deep silence answered Jetta's speech which the wild warriors had but partly understood. The king looked hesitatingly around the circle of his followers and noticed how many a chieftain cast longing looks at the beauteous woman. The

priestess alone shot malicious looks from under her heavy oak wreath and gray locks at the strange woman, now celebrating a triumph of beauty over the hearts of the barbarians. But certain of the older men clashed their shields together. "We do not wish for peace, we demand war. Let their blood flow on the stone of Wodan." "Silence," ordered the king. "Let the oracle be consulted. Bring here the runes," he cried to the priestess, who hesitatingly returned to her hut. Whilst the chiefs assembled together so as to consult in a low voice, Jetta with calm dignity approached Nasica and loosened his bonds, in doing which she was aided by Vulflaich and no one dared to hinder her as the king suffered her to proceed. In the meanwhile the priestess had spread out a white linen cloth on the grass and handed an urn to the priest in which were letters, on which various signs had been scratched. The aged Sunno spake Wodan's raven spell, the sacred formula:

"Alfen verstehen,
Nornen verkünden,
Menschen erdulden,
Walkyren vollenden."

Then he blindly groped within the urn and threw a handful of runes on the cloth. "Decipher," Macrian now commanded the old priestess. There were as many signs for R as for other letters. The old woman gazed at the letters and then said:

"Rom reitet rückwärts, raunet die Rune,
Schwertbiss im Nacken tödtet den Wurm."
(Rome rides backwards, runs the rune, sword-cut in
neck kills the worm).

The Alemanni struck their swords together, but suddenly all was still, as drawn up to her full height Jetta stepped up to the linen cloth. Scarcely a greater contrast could be imagined between the highest beauty and the most extreme ugliness, than between this beauteous woman with the dark eyes of the prophetess and the shrivelled up old woman, whose glance was cast maliciously and obliquely to one side. All eyes were fixed on Jetta's mouth. And as it she had been accustomed to decipher the sacred rimes from youth upwards, she began:

"Ross und Reiter sinken im Rhenus
Ruhmlos verwechselt, wer rathlos rennt."
(Horse and rider sink in the Rhine, without fame
does he perish who runs without thought).

But the sorceress began anew:

“Rastlos reiten Riesen und Recken
Rückwärts rufet römischer Trug.”

(Restless ride giants and heroes, backwards calls
roman deceit.)

But Jetta now answered:

“Rosen und Reben rathen zu rasten,
Rauschtrank und Rundtrank regt richtigen Rath.”

(Roses and grapes urge on to rest, a round drink,
a big drink gives rightly advice.)

This exciting scene of ready wit had stilled the thirst for blood among the warriors and a suppressed smile might be noticed on many bearded face. The last decree of the gods was quite obvious to the heroes. All devotion was at an end. “Barley juice, mead, mead,” was cried on all sides.

“Wodan demands an offering,” said the priestess curtly.

The king however decided. “Let us spare the prisoners till the counsel to conclude peace has been taken into consideration. I offer however

to Wodan the black charger that I ride. Bring forth the steed."

Hortari hastened towards a clearing where the king's war-horse was bound to a beech. He led it by the bridle up to the giant's stone. The noble beast smelt the blood of former offerings and shied at the bleached skulls of horses which looked down from the trees with extended nostrils. Jetta grieved for the proud steed, but she remained silent. In the mean time the priestess had fanned the sacrificial flame on the stone and the charger was led up quite close to it. Sunno, the officiator, seized a long knife and plunged it in the horse's throat so that a stream of blood like a red fountain shot upwards, sprinkling those around, whilst the quivering animal sank down on his knees. The officiating priest now seized it, forced it down to the ground and his companion now completed the cutting of the throat. A dish caught up the blood and soon a huge kettle was placed on the fire, in which the priestess cooked the sacrificial meal from the dismembered beast, whose powerful quarters were roasted at the open fire. With smothered voice the priest intoned the prayer of blood, and each of the free men stepped up and dipped

his hand in the red pool. Jetta turned away in disgust and sat down among the prisoners, who had sunk once more to their former state of stupefied resignation, and without thinking of flight or deliverance gazed at the practices carried on around them. The king had however ordered great pitchers of sweetened mead to be brought, and after that the meal had been spread, the beakers and hollowed drinking-horns passed from hand to hand, the priestess herself not being among the most modest drinkers. Even Jetta did not refuse the gifts which the king sent to her and to the prisoners. Vulflaich alone refused with horror to participate in the feast of the dæmons. The Germans laughed but did not urge it. For hours had the cups passed from hand to hand and had been emptied in silent devotion. The priestess full of the god had fallen asleep and thus the most bloodthirsty enemy of the prisoners was quieted. The young men now began to sing war-songs in praise of Wodan and Donar, then more heartfelt, milder melodies in praise of Baldur and of Freya the beauteous. At last as night fell over the valley and that the moon rose full and large over the valley all became still. Silently

did the young men repose leaning against the rocks, the old men sat in council together, and having become more peaceful in disposition, inclined for peace with Rome. One of the women from the hut kindled a mighty fire on the stone altar, which shed its flickering red flame on the savage groups lying around. The glow worms hovered in the bushes flying around in mystic circles. The priestess' assistant crouched near the fire, to pile ever and anon fresh logs. Jetta sat near her, her face buried in her fair hands, whilst her wolf, which finally had discovered her track, now stretched itself out at her feet. As Jetta looked up to heaven, a sudden shiver ran through her frame. She saw on the moon's disk a small black shadow which slowly increased. That portended mischief, but for whom? She listened with intense anxiety, and as the general conversation of the eagerly speaking chieftains had just ceased, the wind bore to her sharp ear certain expressions of the deliberations of the nobles. As she perceived that it was now a question of peace and war, of the life and death of her protégés, she arose and solemnly ascended the sacrificial stone. She stood out spectrally in the uncertain shimmer of the darkened

moonlight and of the flickering flame, so that a superstitious shudder ran over the assembly. Her voice sounded loud and clear. The prophetess first addressed proud words of acknowledgment to the warriors whom she called her companions in arms, she praised those fallen, but she regretted the war. In beauteous imagery she began to praise peace with Rome, through which the gifts of the people passed to and fro from hand to hand in amicable exchange. She described how salutary it would be were their young men to journey in the empire and learn to read the runes, written by wise men, to bring across the Rhenus artistic vessels and rich wines, in exchange for wares produced in abundance by the Germans, without bloody wars and deep wounds. Only the minority of the Germans grown old in the service of Rome understood her address. But her deep voice, her fanatic eyes, the warm glow of intellect on her beauteous face had in themselves a peculiar eloquence, and as she raised her full white arms and let them sink down so expressively, these savages were convinced by her words, even if they knew not exactly what Jetta meant.

“Chnodamar, tell me what she says!” whis-

pered one youth to another, as he seemed to devour Jetta with his eyes.

"She says we ought to make peace with Rome, then we would receive wine and spangles."

"That would be good," said Rufilo; "but for nothing?"

"We should give in return buffalo skins and captive Chatti."

"Buffaloes and Chatti shall they have," said Chnodamar, "those we are always glad to catch, it is good sport, also fat Boii and Burgundians, as many as they wish. But what says she now? The monk looks at her as if he would like to strangle her."

"We must acknowledge the gods of Rome and build up their temples again, then shall we be happy. But there—see the little man."

Jetta's speech had now taken a turn intelligible to the Alemanni. She was reminding them of the gods of Rome whose wrath it was advisable for even the Alemanni to appease, when Vulfilaich began to move restlessly. The sacrifice which he had witnessed had in itself greatly disquieted him, but these were forms which he had been accustomed to from youth upwards and so he had let these

pass unnoticed. As now Jetta began however to speak of building up once more the Roman temples, the German and monkish defiance in him began to assert itself, and as the more often in the last weeks he had struggled in hot nights of torture against the image of this woman, so much the more passionately did he collect himself to break through the charm which she had spun around him and whose threads she now likewise cast over the hearts of the chiefs of his race. "So now do you decide," cried Jetta, with a look of pride as if Jupiter Capitolinus had given her the mission in person, "decide whether you will have the gods of the empire as friends or foes?" Vulfilaich at this rushed upon the rock and stretching out his cross towards her, cried, "Silence the accursed mouth which proclaims idolatry!" With the quick determination to compel himself to take up the challenge, had he sprung up, as a man plunges into the current of a river. But the floats necessary for swimming were wanting. The words came not. He only felt that he was standing here, that all eyes were directed towards him and to he knew not what he should speak. Jetta however looked at him calmly and fixedly, a quiet contempt

expressed on her countenance. A slight movement of her shoulders seemed to say "Thou?" and Vulfilaich understood but too well this expressive gesture. Her eyes seemed to look through him. He thought to read therein: "Were you not he who thought to sneak in by me, as the beast lying here at my feet can testify? Didst thou not wish to embrace me in thine own cavern, which thou didst turn into a bower of sensuality in thine own wicked thoughts? Hadst thou not already stretched out thine arms to draw me to thee as my wolf did frighten thee away?" His wicked conscience read all this in the pale face turned towards him in cold derision. The wolf then rose up and looked at him growling. The barbarians cheered the wolf on as Vulfilaich mentally convulsed utterly broke down. His evil spirit rent him as in wild struggle he writhed at the feet of the proud propheticess. But at that moment a murmur of terror and horror arose. "The moon, the moon!" shouted some of the warriors. The women near the hut uttered a shout of woe and beat the drum to help the god, whom Fenrir's wolf had caught up, so that its shadow had already darkened it. Jetta's wolf began to howl, as if it presaged the danger for the god,

now only visible at the edges. But the enemy retreated not, the disk was completely darkened. As Jetta looked up she noticed the terribly beautiful spectacle and quickly making up her mind, pointing with upraised right hand to the eclipse she stepped up to Macrian: "Your fate will become as dark as your god," she said in her deep voice, "if thou despisest the signs in the heavens. Wilt thou, O king, release the prisoners, wilt thou conclude peace with me and with Rome, or wilt thou not?"

"I will," answered the king, filled with superstitious horror.

"Then set these men free."

"They are thine."

"And thou art ready to conclude an alliance with Valentinian, offensive and defensive, for life and death, in all faith and constancy?"

"I am ready," said Macrian, for as he looked around he saw all his people prostrate on the ground, the priestess lightly touched the drum, and the monk squirmed at Jetta's feet in mute agony. He alone stood up near the flame, and the terrible woman. Then did he also reverentially kneel down, so that she might put an end to this terrific

spectacle. When he at last dared to look up to the sky, the silvery disk on the opposite side was again clear, and after a time the god poured forth his mild light once more over the still woodland as if nothing had happened. Quietly and silently did the warriors depart, to repose for the night in the wood.

"Keep thy word, O king, that my gods may not punish thee," said Jetta. The twelve Romans prostrated themselves before the prophetess and kissed the hem of her garment. When Jetta turned round to look for the priestess she had disappeared. "I shall therefore rule over this sacred grove," she said, and ordered the prisoners to retire to the hut of the priestess, whilst she returned with her wolf to the cave.

CHAPTER X.

Thus had the sacrificial feast ended. The weather-beaten warriors stretched themselves out in small groups around the mighty trees. Here and there low whispers as to the wondrous events which had taken place might be heard. Then all was still, and for many hours nothing was noticeable but the distant rushing of the river and the wailing of the night wind in the forest of oaks. As the day broke in the east, king Macrian arose and silently paced to and fro near the altar among the sleeping warriors. The words of the prophetess had deeply affected him, for he longed for peace. The young men of his tribe were turning into savages through protracted warfare, and it was impossible to make the conquered territory productive so long as these cries to arms lasted. Whilst he thus in

deep thought paced among the aged trunks from which the bleached skulls of horses looked grinningly down on him, he heard a deep sigh such as no earthly sorrow could have possibly extracted, so bitter did it sound in this still morn. Macrian looked around and beheld the young monk sitting near a tree with his face buried in his hands. The king paused and gazed on this wonderful young penitent, who born in the palace lived as a beggar. Deep pity for this fallen man moved the king, and mildly did he speak: "Be comforted, son of Vadomar. It is no disgrace for thee that she overcame thee. Didst thou forget the dictum,

Es sitzt die Riesin im Erlengebüsch
Und füttert im Walde Fenrir's Geschlecht,
Des Mondes Mörder, den schlimmen Wolf.

Thy God was too weak for the woman who can even darken the moon."

Vulfilaich shook fendingly his shock head and looked at the king earnestly with his sad deep sunken eyes. "My God is strong," he said calmly, "but I was weak. For weeks I have loved this woman with sinful heart and therefore the power to break her charm failed me."

"If that be so," answered Macrian with a good-natured smile, "then pull off the dress that thou wearest and gird on sword and armour." Again Vulfilaich stared at the king as if he understood not what he said.

"Behold, it grieveth me to see the large inheritance," continued the king, "the fairest between Spechtshardt and Wodanwald, that lies fallow for years and since Rothari's death only waiting for its master, namely for thee. Rothari is dead, the Romans have sacrificed him, Vithikab is dead, the Romans have assassinated him, Fraomar wanders as outlaw in strange lands, the Romans have driven him out — thou only among Vadomar's sons art left, and once thou didst promise to be a warrior, before that thy head was turned. Shake off this wretched fanaticism, and when thou feelest once more a horse under thee and a sword in thine hand, then wilt thou recover."

At these words Vulfilaich's face lighted up and he drew himself to his full height. Boldly did he approach the king and said "Do not hope for that, king of the Alemanni. Thou makest for thyself a bloody road, and raven and wolf follow on thy heels, for they know that they will find

slain men on thy path. For two days have I followed thine army, because this woman was an attraction, but I saw the traces of the red horse in the heavens in the glow of conflagration. I saw them in the red pools of blood on thy chariot. I do not wish to see them again, for I am in the service of a peace which is older than all struggle and strife on earth. I shall quit this valley, which beheld my weakness, so soon as I have done a work, which the heavenly voice imposed on me."

The king looked at him in amazement, so much had the face of the young penitent altered. He had shaken off his grief and looked boldly into Macrian's eyes.

"Can one know the work imposed on thee by thy God?" asked Macrian suspiciously.

"Honour his higher power" said Vulfilaich. "The God of the Christians is just and when we think through our talents to surmount his orders, he shows us to our detriment that he is wiser than we. Yonder in the depths of the mountain is the image of the dæmon who rules over this valley. The Spirit said to me lately: 'Thou shalt testify against this idolatrous image and against all who worship before it, and destroy it.' As I was

about to do as the voice had commanded me, Rothari held back my arm, and sent me away, so that I left unfinished what I had been distinctly ordered to perform. What was the consequence, king Macrian? At the feast of the god, whom Rothari saved, the heathens slew him as sacrifice, and at the altar of this very idol he suffered me also yesterday to be turned to confusion. To-day only have I conceived his punishing hand. This very night was it disclosed to me, and now do not thou hinder me from fulfilling my office. It would be disastrous both to thee and to me."

"My boys have not left many images standing in the neighbourhood," said the king with a proud smile, "still if thou knowest of one pernicious to man and beast, destroy it for ever, and close up the dæmon's entry into the valley, that he may not avenge himself. Where wouldst thou go, after having done this?"

"To Bishop Martinus of Turonia. He will tell me what to do."

"Then go, Vulfilaich, son of Vadomar. Thy inheritance is confiscated, but when thou art tired of wandering come thou back to me. My people

will ever have a hoof of land left for Rothari's brother."

"May the God of Job, who gives peace to all the heights, bring rest even to thee," replied the monk as he turned to depart towards the valley. He soon found the ford which he was wont to use when crossing the river and reaching the other side, climbed up the slope to the grotto of Mithras. The entrance was half choked up by the burning of the villa, and the Alemanni who had built up their log houses on both sides, had piled up the building material behind the fountain. With difficulty did the youth force his way through nettles and weeds to the hidden opening. Every thing inside was unaltered, and the sacrificing youth on the stone image gazed as on the previous day sadly on the monk. "Thou dost not deceive me a second time," said Vulfilaich coldly, as he swung his hammer on to the beautiful face so that it cracked. Then with steady strokes he bent to one side the first iron which held the heavy stone slab. The second likewise gave way before his powerful strokes. But sooner than he expected, the heavy mass fell forwards, turned over and buried the young monk in its fall.

Vulfilaich lay crushed from his breast downwards by the heavy stone and no human ear heard his death-rattle. But his death was sweet. Angels surrounded him and smiled on him; in blissful delight did he once more behold those blue mansions of the skies, which he had formerly seen, and his passionate restless heart stood still. The struggle between nature and obedience was at an end. Calm and beautiful was the expression of his face, he had died a martyr to his belief. The upper entrance to the Grotto had sunk in by the destruction of the villa. The other giving into the valley was gradually closed up by the inhabitants and the brushwood covered it. The fountain alone recalled to the remembrance of the dwellers near the dark recollection, that this had once been a sanctuary of the Romans and that a *dæmon* lived in the mountain, till even this reminiscence died out.

The Alemannian warriors left the valley the day after the sacrifice just as quickly as they had arrived. The king carried off the prisoners, who had stared the most horrible of deaths in the face, down the Rhenus, and sent a message to Valentinian, that he was ready to set them free, in case the emperor would ransom them with gold and

silver. As Jetta had predicted Valentinian answered with a proposal to conclude a peace. Macrian gave a curt answer, but he nevertheless named a place on the Rhene, two hours above Mogontiacum, where the Romans could assemble in case they desired to make peace with the Alemanni. The Augustus hastened obediently to the place to which the barbarians had summoned him. Scantily entrenched lay the suite of the emperor behind the leather tents on the left side of the river. Some horsemen in scale armour kept watch on the heights above the dykes, whilst Valentinian himself strode along the soft white sand on the banks accompanied by Ausonius and Merobaudes the Frank. Angrily did the eye of the sovereign gaze over towards Macrian's mountains and then thoughtfully follow the course of the light green waters of the Rhene, as here and there they brought down with them a foam-bubble or piece of wood. But he had no eye for the varied colouring of the green gold waves and no ear for the sounds of the dreaming waters. Fixedly did he gaze. Even his two companions were silent, for they feared their lord's dark humour.

"Would that my illustrious Augustus," at last

said Ausonius, "did not look upon this small cloud as the beginning of night, it will soon disappear and Valentinian's sun beam forth brightly as ever."

"May be, Ausonius," said the king bitterly. "But our years of labour were in vain. Over yonder the Alemanni have destroyed my castellum, and the Quadi cross over the Danube. Who is however to blame? The excessive zeal of disobedient servants who are too strong to fear my punishment. Our disasters here began with the cowardly murder of Vithikab, ordered by Syagrius and which I had to sanction as I feared his family. Every thing goes wrong on the Danubius since the treacherous assassination of the king of the Quadi, which I never wished, and yet never dared punish. Which river shall I now keep, the Rhene against the Alemanni, or the Danubius against the Quadi. Wherever I may place myself, a part of the kingdom is left open to the barbarians."

"Thou hast no choice," now spake up the powerful Frank Merobaudes, "thou must conclude with Macrian, demand whatever he may. That which his on the other side of the Rhene has been lost for a hundred years and only fools like Julianus divus, or Arator's crazy daughter ever

thought of re-conquest. I have never looked upon the struggle about the Nicer as anything else than a good exercise for our soldiers. Now however the game is turning into sober earnest. The Quadi already invade this side of the Danubius. Do thou repel them."

Valentinian gazed fixedly across the face of the waters. "Dost thou not see heads yonder? Is that not my illustrious foe, the savage Macrian? Right, I recognise now the boar helmet. Now they descend. Let the bearers of the gold shields turn out."

The Frank directed his steps towards the camp and soon a brilliant train with gold armour and shining helmets appeared. The red bannerets fluttered in the wind and the golden cross of the army's pennon gleamed in the morning light. But from the other side only a simple Alemann entered the boat, who steered by an experienced ferryman rowed with mighty strokes against the stream. It was the aged Wulf, who thus ventured alone in the camp of the faithless Romans. As the news of Macrian's approach spread itself in the camp, all the soldiers flocked up on the heights and the white sand heaps bristled with lances. The

boat now stopped and Wulf in his buffalo helmet and leather jerkin faced the Augustus. Drawn up to his full height the weather-beaten gray-bearded warrior strode up to the enemy. He greeted not, but cried aloud in a rusty screeching voice, "Macrian, king of the Buccinobantes and dux of all the Alemanni, invites thee over to our side, ensuring thee safety to decide and settle with him the quarrel between us and hear what our people demands of Rome."

"What?" said Valentinian and the veins on his forehead stood out. "I shall row across the Rhine to meet this kinglet! I am the Augustus of the Roman empire. Macrian must come to me, the small to the great, such is the order of the whole world."

"Who prays, goes to him from whom he prays," laughed the old Wolf, nodding his head assertingly so that the bull's horns on his helmet met. "It is not we, who beg for peace. If thou dost not do this, we shall indeed cross, but with ten thousand men. All will once more be finely arranged in Mogontiacum since Rando left it."

Merobaudes smote on his sword. "Mind thy

tongue, old Isegrimm, or thou hast barked for the last time."

"As you like," laughed the old man. "You murder ambassadors as we know, and for this very cause, because no oath, no treaty, no justice is sacred to you, will Macrian not cross over to your side. Where is now Rothari's father, Vadomar, whom Julian enticed hither? You sent him to Spain, and then to the Persians and Phenicians. Where did you send Vithikab and Rothari, and now the king of the Quadi? To Hel's kingdom from which none return. He who does not observe faith, cannot demand confidence. Come with me, king Valentinian, or wait till ten thousand young wolves swim over this shallow lake."

Valentinian hesitated. "How many followers can I take over with me?" he asked.

"As many as this boat will contain," replied Wulf candidly.

"What will be our guarantee that you do not murder us?"

"The word of a German, of a king," said Wulf sternly, as his eyes gleamed from under the buffalo helmet.

"Come then," said Valentinian and sprang into the long ferry boat. Merobaudes followed and next came Ausonius rather doubtfully. Then four of the gold shield bearers entered in, as well as a secretary with rolls and parchment. The boat was shoved off and no word was spoken, whilst the two Germans propelled the boat against the stream with oars and poles, till they had rowed sufficiently to drift into the place of landing with the current. There they found Macrian standing proudly like a lighthouse in a port. The barbarians who surrounded him, were in wild excitement. Like children did they show their joy, as Valentinian descended with his followers in an evidently inimical mood. The savages laughed and mocked him in words which luckily no Roman understood. "He must kneel, he must kneel, as did our kings before Julian and Probus."

"Let us cut off his beard, so that he may know, that he is our slave," cried another.

"See, how they have decked themselves out like Gallic women. Gilt tin, nothing but gilt tin," laughed the bold fair-headed Hortari, as with his double-headed axe he smote the gold shield of

the Roman standing next to him with such force that a piece flew off. A general shout of laughter rewarded this act. The Romans however turned pale. "Are we to be murdered here?" cried Valentinian in a voice of rage.

"No," rejoined Macrian, "thou art not with a Roman, but with the kings of the Alemanni. The boy wanted only to see what your weapons were worth."

"Where is the beauteous gold helmet, which Rothari brought back to thee?" cried Rando. "Hast thou already suffered it to be pulled off thy head? For that it was not necessary for Rothari to redeem it. And as thanks thou didst murder the donor. Shame upon thee, perjured scoundrel."

"Murdered on the altar, in the presence of the gods," said Macrian, looking contemptuously at Valentinian.

"Curses on your heads, you faithless dogs!" cried the followers, and they shook their shields, so that the sound could be heard on the other side of the Rhene, and caused the Romans to gather together in fear. Valentinian however turned pale and stepped back. He thought to

reach the boat, but found there the gray-headed Wulf leaning calmly on his oar.

At last Macrian commanded silence. "Thou wishest to know, at what price we grant peace," he said proudly. "Thou dost not need to raze the castles and watch-towers on our bank, we have done that for thee. Those still standing at Alta Ripa, and yonder near the basilica may remain, in case the garrison keep the peace, otherwise woe to thee and to them. The tribute, which thou didst pay formerly, must thou now pay up and from this day forward double the amount in gold and silver. Moreover we demand from thee a hundred trained slaves, who understand building and pottery. Besides a thousand full and complete suits of armour for cavalry and infantry. Thus have the people decided in council." Valentinian turned to Ausonius and the Notarius. "Draw up the treaty. Instead of tribute, write presents," he added in Greek. The two sat down on the bank and advising each other in a low tone, they wrote down the details in consonance, whilst the Alemanni surrounded them in curiosity and beheld with astonishment, how quickly Ausonius painted the strange runes.

"He who writes well," said Wulf, "is wont to fight badly."

Others felt inquisitively the strangers' weapons and tried whether they could not make bosses in the gold shield with their fingers. The Romans stood there depressed, whilst Valentinian strode silently up and down with his face turned to the mountains, as if he could not behold this disgrace to the empire. The documents were at last drawn up. Macrian ordered Rando, who understood the characters, to examine the rolls and then gave his own in Hortari's charge. "Let three among you remain with us as hostages," he said imperiously to Valentinian, "till the first payment has been made. Then shall I also surrender the prisoners, for whom Jetta pleaded."

Valentinian approached the youngest man of his body-guard, and induced by the kind beseeching words of the overwhelmed Augustus three of the young men stepped up to Macrian and offered themselves as pledges. The emperor then entered the boat without a word, and while the Germans struck up a barbaric song of victory, the emperor supporting his mighty head between his sinewy hands crossed the river to join his men. When

landing Merobaudes approached him with due courtesy. The emperor however looked at him in a troubled manner and said: "I had not witnessed this day, had Rothari lived," but the Frank understood not what the emperor meant.

CHAPTER XI.

Some days after this Macrian returned once more to the Nicer, in order to conceal the battle ensigns of his people at the end of the war in the sacred hedge. Bright fires of victory gleamed that evening on all the heights and the priestess fanned into life on the following morning the sacred red flame. The king's war-charger was sacrificed to Wodan, and the warriors revelled in the horse-broth and large vessels full of barley juice. Whilst the festival was in full swing, the happy company called to mind the sorceress, who had graced the preceding sacrifice and her wise counsels were lauded by the kings. Whilst recalling her secret art and sublime words, many urged that Jetta

should be installed as priestess of the grove and that the charge of the trophies should be entrusted to her. But Macrian remained silent. He had thought of another position for the fair woman, which would bind Jetta for ever to his side. The cunning man had argued to himself that the sorceress could disclose to him through her magic arts many a rich treasure hidden under the ground, waiting only for hands to dig it out. He wished also for her experienced advice in his treaties with Rome. She knew all the lands, people, languages and mighty nations, he would appoint her to be his notarius, so that he also might appear like a veritable prince. How well it would look when he sat in the brown halls at the head of his warriors and the beauteous woman throned at his side in Roman garb with the golden circlet in her hair. So must it be. Had not other chiefs, who had formerly lived in Italy as mercenaries or hostages, brought back to their homes as wives noble Roman matrons, and how greatly had their wise counsels and polished manners raised their husbands. For this cause would he bring back Jetta as his wife to one of his palaces, there should she live as queen, together with the other five wives,

whom he already possessed in other forts. Lightly did the king steal away from the feast and went alone to the cavern of the new Velleda, where he remained longer than an hour. But he returned at mid-day silent and absent-minded, gazing darkly into space. Soon after this the old Wulf returned from the wood and seated himself on the stone at the side of the king, who was gazing with angry looks into the flames.

"As I was wandering about the wood," began the old man at last, passing his sinewy hand through his beard as if in perplexity, "I heard the voice of a king who angrily cried: 'We are no barbarians like the Skythians. We are peasants, a stationary people with laws and customs. If we have become coarse during this long struggle with Rome, that is your fault. Gallia half belonged to us when you came, and in the end, what had you to seek here on this side of the Rhenus? If in this struggle our people has become savage, do thou become sovereign and civilise it!' I felt only half pleased that the king apologised to a foreign woman for my people, of whom I am proud. But I heard another word to which I willingly listened, as the king said, 'For this cause do I love my

people, because it takes pleasure in fatigue and labour, in struggle and danger, in storm and war, and fears not wind nor weather.' That was spoken as a king should speak. What was answered to the king I could not understand, but I heard him depart with angry words. On clambering down the hill, in which our old Huns are buried, I saw seated before the cave a fair pale woman with arms folded; I knew her and as she had done us good service, I asked her why she trembled and was fearful? She however fixed her black eyes on my face, so that I knew not how I felt and I said to her, 'Fear not, the old Wulf will protect thee against the king's hatred.' She sprang up however and said, 'I fear not his hatred, but protect me from his love.' Or some such words. I however find my king's face troubled. How shall I explain this?"

Macrian looked darkly to one side. "She is a slave, and after the right of war I can seize her in case she will go, as she threatens."

"Certainly, my king, that canst thou. Thou canst cut the sinew of her ancles as happened to Wieland the Smith so that in spite of all his magic arts he could not fly away, but then take heed that she

does not injure thee, as Wieland injured the child of his king, and finally does not escape from thee in a magic feather skirt, or in a dragon chariot through the air."

"I wished to make her my wife, but she spurned me from her like some low-born knave. Now is my drink embittered in spite of all our victories, and my mead tastes sour. I boasted of my ancestry and told her that we descended from Donar. She however laughed mockingly and said, 'Six warriors in horse-skin sat around Rothari's hearth and each descended from a god.' Shall I submit to such an insult."

"Women must be beaten with flowers, says the proverb. She may perhaps yet be tamed," laughed the older man.

"Tamed? She will fly away like a wild dove."

"Knowest thou, king of the Buccinobantes, how doves may be tamed?"

Macrian looked at the old man inquisitively. The latter smiled within his white beard, then said slyly: "The white bird must be encaged, but one smears the prison with thyme and aniseed, and and gives the dove what it wishes. If it pours buckets full, or Frau Holle shakes her beds so

that the white flakes fly out, then do you open the cage, not of a morning, but if a downright stormy night is at hand. The bird will dash out and enjoy its liberty. Then it will look around and shiver, and when night comes it will turn back of its own accord into the cage, which it so angrily pecked at the previous day and find it quite comfortable."

"How does this apply?" asked the king excitedly.

"Keep her a prisoner till the winter snows block up the roads, or war breaks out anew. She cannot return to the people whom she betrayed. Neither can she wander about the country in winter weather or in times of war. Thus she will be happy to serve thee as maid, who refused this day to be thy queen."

"Perhaps thou art right, old graybeard," assented Macrian, and Wulf smiled.

"An old knife often has a place where it still can cut," said he, well pleased, and then shook with laughter at giving advice in love-matters. The king now stood up. "Do thou then tell her that I shall no more mention my wishes. She may occupy one of the Roman houses, which the fire

spared. But she must not go into Gaul, as she threatened; the Augustus would kill her. If in a year and a day our friendship with Rome has stood the test then she may depart whither she will." Thus saying the king turned away, and Wulf was compelled to enter on his errand. "Wulf as love's messenger," laughed the gray-beard so that his buffalo helmet shook. "If anything would now only occur to me, crazy enough to make an impression upon such a Roman widow," did he growl inwardly. "If they acted on my advice, they would encage her in one of the Roman houses yonder, in which she formerly lived. She will have to stay there, because she knows not where to go. She will not be very much pleased with her villa after the rather abrupt departure of her marble fountain and white statues of gods. But she cannot remain in the wood during the winter." The nearer the old man came to Jetta's cave the more uncomfortable he felt. The mead had made his legs heavy and his mind was not quite so clear as he might have wished on so important an errand. When he found himself within a stone's throw of the cave, he thought it better to sit down on the trunk of a tree so as to consider

how best he might broach the matter. After a time Jetta heard among the trees a coarse voice, which sang at first half aloud and monotonously, soon however powerfully increasing, a barbarian song which he accompanied with mighty rhythmical thumps. After that Jetta had accustomed her ear to the wondrous sounds, she was enabled to make out the following words:

“Schaust du dies Schwert, Maid, so zauber-
scharf,

Das ich halt in der Hand hier?

Es fiel seiner Schneide dein Vater und todt ist
der Alte.

Setze dich nieder, so nenn ich dir zwiefachen
Kummer und schwere Schmerzensbrandung:

Angst und Klagen — Unruh und Kerker.

Je mehr der Trübsal, Je mehr der Thränen.”

How Jetta liked the song has not been told us, her wolf however began to howl vigorously even before that the bold minstrel had finished, and as the latter appeared with stiff heavy tread out from among the bushes, the animal greeted him with an evil growl. The old man heeded this not, he sat down close to Jetta and asked her how his song had pleased her.

"It sounded rather threatening among the dark woods," said Jetta. "It surely was a battle-song?"

"It is a holy hymn," said Wulf, not without a feeling of self-satisfaction, "and describes Freya's wooing of the earth, which lies in the custody of the winter giant."

"Do all thy gods woo so politely?" asked Jetta rather satirically.

"Gods and heroes," answered the old man roughly, and his eyes flashed. "My king sends thee his greeting, and requests thee to choose one among the stone houses in the valley, as in his opinion a noble woman does not do well to lie unprotected and alone in the woods."

"I am responsible for my own actions," said Jetta curtly, "and if I required a house, I would not ask thy king for one."

The old Wulf knit his brows. Then he spake oracularly: "The nightingale lives not from singing but from worms, and a prophetess is after all but a being with mouth and stomach. Winter will prove that to thee. But a noble and chaste woman should not wish to live in a cave. A vagrant woman can creep in here with her lovers,

but of one who may be of importance at some future time to the people, it will sound badly, when it is said, her husband fetched her out of a hole in the ground."

"I have not requested any to fetch me out," said Jetta, an angry flush spreading over her forehead and cheeks. "Have no anxiety however about me. My wolf will preserve order before Jetta's cave."

Wulf hesitated, but he saw how the wolf fixed him with its wicked eyes. In the background the owl's green eyes glowed, so that a superstitious shudder ran over the old man. Perhaps there was more in her arts than he thought and thus he only insisted that Jetta should not run away secretly from his people, but in case she left, depart from them with an honorable farewell. On that she gave him her hand. Nothing was further from her proud mind than stealing away from them in secret. Moreover she felt within herself, that no choice was left her. Valentinian would at least have ordered her to be immured alive, like a vestal who had broken her vows, had he managed to take her prisoner. Thus she remained, because she had to remain.

But she was no longer the hermit cut off from the world, which she had been when first she sought a place of concealment in the cave. Since that she had rescued the Roman prisoners from death and by her interference brought about peace between two nations, she had become once more conscious of her power over men's minds. The dull inactive mood, which for many weeks had led her to suppose that it was sufficient for her heart to live for herself and her grief, had departed from her. True it was that the happy enthusiasm of her fantastic maiden dreams was gone. On the way through sin and misfortune she had lost a great portion of the idealism and excitement which formerly had been the source of her power. Her soul was bereft of all its youthfulness, but not its courage. Accustomed to base her actions on the highest views and to conceive her undertakings on the proud stand-point of a mind believing in the supreme, the idea of a vocation yet left to her, by degrees presented itself once more. Her marriage had been a mistake, and all the troubles of the last years had arisen from this the most false step of her life. To carry out the word, which a deity had imprinted on

her heart, she should remain a virgin as Velleda or the daughter of Hystaspes. She had atoned by her sufferings as wife and mother for having broken faith with the voice within her. Perhaps was it for that very reason that the holy art had proved inimical to her, because she had been defiled. Now however could she begin her life anew. All whom she loved were numbered among the dead, all her fetters were fallen off, she could now be a real sibyl, a real prophetess. She could not return to Rome. She had broken down the bridges. Thus would she remain here preaching the arts of peace to the barbarians, insisting on amity with Rome, working for an alliance with Rome. She would officiate as the only priestess of the gods of the empire on the abandoned altars.

Hot and fiery did the evening sun break through the old trees of the beloved grove. The plain lay before her as fragrant and as golden as during the days of her happiness. As her eyes rested on the loved valley, she felt as if her dark past was falling away from her and new duties began to fill out the feeling of emptiness, which she had borne within her since the death of her child. She thought of the small Roman population,

which like herself would be compelled to remain behind among the Alemanni. She would remain with it as its adviser and comforter. She had renounced the former proud aims of her life. To console the companions of her fate, appeared to be for her at that moment sufficient vocation. If everything else had been dream and emptiness, the sufferings which she could assuage were something certain. Her work in this green wooded valley was not over, it had but begun. She would go about, collect the Roman community, encourage it, keep it together. Where but a spark of a higher life glowed, this would she fan into a sacred flame. Where the abandoned had doubted as to the better qualities of humanity, there she would stretch forth her hand. She would win over the barbarians themselves to culture and taste. In this manner she would become in a higher sense the genius of the valley, than she had ever dreamt before. Her destiny might perhaps resemble that of the daughter of Agamemnon among the Scythians, or of the unfortunate Cassandra, Priam's ill-starred daughter, by devoting herself to the Alemanni, and at the same time to those Romans left behind. Her burden was not light, she knew it

and wept over herself and spread flowers over her grave, but however much dimness and self-worship might be mingled up with these fantastic plans, her impulse to do something for the world although she was but a woman, had in itself a breath of magnanimity and ennobled her above thousands who in her position would have retired into some corner, to egotistically live out their own safety.

Her insisting on living in the cave seemed to Lupicinus and her own servants as an eccentricity of disposition. But they understood not the horror which Jetta felt in thinking of the dwelling in which wandered Rothari's ghost and when the pale head of her child must ever appear again before her eyes. Another cause for repugnance kept Jetta away from the scenes of her former happiness, a repugnance which she scarcely dared admit to herself. Her cabbalistic books were hidden in the house, the last cause of such unspeakable sorrow, and a secret voice in her heart told her that she was not strong enough to keep the oath which she had taken to her dying husband, if it were so easy for her to attain her sacred rolls. "Fly from temptation," she cried inwardly

and she remained in her rock hall, which she considered so much more pleasing than all the gorgeous apartments which she had formerly inhabited. What house could indeed be better suited for her high mission than this cave which seemed expressly made for her part of sibyl.

It seemed also to her as if her position had become more tenable since the day which had seemed so painful to her, when the king courted her in his blunt straightforward manner. Up to the present only the faithful Lupicinus had daily brought food to her and provided her with all needful articles, but now friendly Alemannian children with fair hair and innocent blue eyes found their way up to her cave. They brought the beauteous woman rushes, fruits and flowers and prayed her to instruct them and teach them, for the king wished that they should all be as clever as she. Thus Jetta told them stories, taught them to read and write the Latin songs, which she then translated for them. When of a morning she stepped out and looking at all their fair heads asked jestingly, "How many thatched roofs are there to-day?" then the little band shouted with pleasure and promised to bring up more "straw roofs" on the morrow.

Soon Lupicinus was obliged to make more room, to clear the space before the cavern from brush-wood, so that though formerly hidden as the portal of a rock castle, it now opened on a free space.

The elders came after the children. When the prophetess sat of a mild summer's evening on the stone before her cave with the wolf at her feet, then women and maidens, men and youths gathered around her. In her deep-toned clear voice Jetta then told them of the history of Rome and its great men; she recalled to them the good which Rome had done to this land, she preached peace with Rome and advised the young men to cross over the Rhenus, to seek service as soldiers and look upon the wonder of the world, the city on seven hills and the Forum Trajani. Peace would return to the earth, so she said when a warrior like Rothari, whom Valentinian murdered, reigned as Augustus over both the people. When she thus spoke, her excitement carried her outside of herself and she gave herself up prophetically to the flight of her lofty ideas. "A time will come," she cried once as the people had gathered round her in unusually great numbers, "a time in which the reed-covered borders of the Nicer will be covered with

stone villas, such as you have seen in Gaul. The sovereign who rules over both people will build his palatium on the Bühl, such as the city on the seven hills could not show more beautiful. Vines will weave about these hills, ships will glide up and down on the green waves of the Nicer, and Alemanni and Romans will be one people. Kings will go out from this valley and govern all people from the blue sea to the Wodanwald." With widely opened eyes did the simple women and unsophisticated youths and warriors gaze upon the prophetess. She was so beautiful when she spake with so much warmth and her voice sounded full and bell-like out into the valley. She herself however felt proud of this influence and believed in her own prophecies, although she knew not how they came to her. "There will be peace, when a German such as Rothari becomes emperor and as such unites Roman and Barbarian," that was her new prophecy. When this took place, then would, so she imagined, the people flock from the north and the south to her cave as if to a Velleda, to listen to her dreams and decipher her oracles. Far from the madding throng of human passion and nevertheless, a prophetess she would sit

enthroned before her cave, disclose the future to nations, reveal to those worthy, treasures hidden under the earth and adjust all disputes between people and people. The more proudly she talked all the more plainly did the belief of the Alemanni increase, who already had the highest confidence in her and flocked to hear her from all sides. Here leaning on his long spear stood a young warrior and visions of a glorious future rose before his eyes; yonder reclined a group of mothers with their little ones, who gazed on the tall woman with large wondering eyes; old warriors who had fought against Rome sat on moss-covered rocks and compared this fanatic praise of the empire with their own experiences of which they were still proud. As even now at times a congregation assembles together on fine evenings in front of the glebe to listen to the exhortations and warnings of some revered priestly elder, so did the inhabitants of the valley gather together evening after evening eagerly before Jettas cave, curious to hear what the sorceress would that day relate. Never before had such a similar power of eloquence worked on the hearts of these simple men, and that the Sibyl spoke the German tongue with so foreign an accent,

only increased her charm. It was part of the character of these plain children of nature, that the thickly crowding groups paid more attention to the eloquent lips of this fair prophetess with their eyes than with their ears. The grace of her movements, the fire of her fascinating eye, the melody of her voice, the flow of her speech ensnared men and youths into the ban of this appearance. They remembered the rune-deciphering women of their own land and called the prophetess Jettrun, as a higher voice spoke to them through her. Thus Jetta had discovered the true charm, the charm of her person, which intoxicated an entire people, whose belief and love related greater wonders concerning her than she had ever formerly worked with her crooked signs and mystical books. Neither was she any longer at a loss as to how she should pass the day. She thought over what she should say to her audience in the evening, as how she should dress in fresh imagery her favorite theme "peace among nations and culture." Was this matter exhausted, then she recited from memory the most beauteous tales about the Hellenes and the Romans, and the mighty swelling and upheaving of Homer's verse, which resembles the ebbing

and flowing waves of the Ocean, echoed thus once more in her melodious rendering. All the types of hellenic virtue, how Alceste died for her husband, how Penelope remained faithful to her absent spouse, how Iphigeneia sacrificed herself for Hellas, all the great figures of this sacred history she passed in review before her credulous hearers and the treasury of her recitations seemed inexhaustible. Soon the reputation of the new Velleda who had settled down in the woodland valley of the Nicer and preached peace spread around the whole Lupodunum district. The Christians warned against her as being a servant of the evil one, but those who had once seen her filled with pure exalted enthusiasm were won over to her and convinced that Jetta was a veritable Alrun. Thus the inhabitants of the district who had confidence in her, often consulted her on matters of business. When merchants from Gaul or Rhætia came, Jetta served as interpreter; she settled many a dispute between Latin coloni and Alemanni, based only on some misconceptions; she talked over many a knavish merchant and preserved her Alemannian clients from being deceived. She refreshed thirsty pilgrims with water from her spring, shared her bread with

the children and extracted the thorn which in the woods had pierced their little feet; she prescribed for the sick so far as her knowledge of herbs permitted. She adjusted quarrels among the new settlers with her wise judgment and both parties bowed before the unselfish decision, which she gave with all the dignity of a sovereign.

On the other hand Jetta was not so lucky in her plan of dedicating herself to the fostering of Roman life among the Latin population which had remained behind. There was no small number of these Latins, but not one came up to her cavern. They saw in Jetta only the traitoress who had betrayed the camp into the hands of the Alemanni and they felt a bitter hatred towards her in their revengeful hearts. It was disagreeable to the haughty woman to abandon the solitude of her grove in order to make the first steps towards drawing near to her own people. Accompanied by Lupicinus and the gigantic wolf she appeared one day to the great astonishment of the villagers in the old pagus of the Nemeti. She was deeply affected, as she, issuing for the first time from the darkness of her sacred oaks, perceived the changes which had taken place in her beloved valley. The

red and yellow boats had disappeared from the surface of the dark green Nicer. The wantonness of the too muscular conquerors had soon brought to grief these finely bowed playthings, and but here and there did a gawdy keel protrude from the bed of the river. Only a fragment of the bridge with a chapel to Neptune on the middle pile yet existed. Traffic with the Rhenus had also ceased since the two people now opposed each other as foes. How pleasant had formerly been the sight of all these gaily painted skiffs as they challenged each other to a race. How delightful those evenings on the shore, when joyous songs echoed from the boats, whose tones long resounded on the face of the water. Jetta sighed. She was guilty of having put a stop to all this, but it had not been her wish. The meadows along the banks were on the other hand glorious as ever with juicy green. They had become like Argolis pastures rich in horses, as the Alemanni turned out here their horses to grass. But the mountain slope above gazed down on Jetta strangely and sadly. The walls of the burnt out villas had partly received new straw roofs or black wooden upper stories, among them arose the dark log-houses of the Ale-

manni, which gave an entirely different character to the valley. The new inhabitants had according to the primitive farming of the barbarians burnt down the wood in many places so as to sow buckwheat and millet in the sart. The summit of the mountain was now through the restoration of the double Alemannian ring surrounded with a twofold fort. Sadly did Jetta gaze upon the desolated valley, which appeared as strange to her as if she had never before seen it, whilst the inhabitants of the surrounding houses stood outside their doors, to look with curiosity on the daughter of Arator who had become the talk of the country. Those dwelling nearest were the merchant Volcius and his wife Lucia Vera, who traded in geese with Noviomagus. "Your village, my friend," said Jetta to the man, "has suffered less than yonder houses. It is difficult for me to recognise the village, which once promised so well." The little man looked spitefully at her. An insult seemed to rise to his lips, but his eyes squinted towards the mighty wolf, so he turned his back shortly on Jetta and pulled his wife within doors. When he had closed the door to a crack he then cried out in a voice husky with rage, "It is perhaps a matter of regret

to thee, thou murderous firebrand, that we are not entirely ruined. Remain with the Alemanni whom thou servest, traitoress, who betrayed her own father." Jetta shuddered as if in pain, but collected herself and went quietly on. Before the threshold of the next house sat an old married couple, Baucis and Philemon, Gratian had called them once. Jetta greeted them, the old people nodded ill at ease in return. "I thought," said Jetta, "that a common misfortune united men. I wished to visit my fellow-countrymen in the pagus of the Nemetes, but it does not seem that I am welcome."

"Whosoever brings what is good is welcome," answered the old man coldly.

"I bring what is good," said Jetta, "I bring my belief in Rome's star. I wish to speak with my people of the old times, and of a fairer future, I wish to assemble them as one small congregation, preserving its speech, its culture, which supports and bears up one another, so that Roman customs do not perish in our valley."

"Then must thou go farther, noble Jetta," said the old woman. "We do not believe in Rome but in the Lord Christ. The union which thou wouldst found, we have already through our Bishop and

his flock. He takes care that we are not lost, better than thou could'st through thy magic arts. Yonder dwells an old priest of your heathen temples, perhaps he will listen to thee, if he be sober;" thus saying the old woman made so energetic a motion of dismissal that Jetta did not dare to tarry longer. She did not feel like calling on the ill-reputed priest of Cybele, rather did she descend to the Nicer, where she saw some of the rough bark-boats of the Alemanni lying. An aged ferryman stood on the shore leaning on his pole. He also was one of the pagani, who had formerly paid homage to Jetta as to a higher being. She asked him to ferry her across, Lupicinus and she wished to inquire about their former neighbours in the Zehnthof. But the man did not stir. He looked up at the mountains and did as if he had not heard. On this Lupicinus angrily approached and asked him what this meant. "It means," replied the other, "that the Bishop has forbidden any intercourse with her, and the next time that thou comest to the Basilica, he will say a word to thee for aiding a heathen and sorceress in her godless plans."

Lupicinus turned pale, he knew not what

Jetta intended. If she really contemplated the restoration of the Roman temples burnt down by the Alemanni, then he also must abandon her. Jetta easily read these thoughts in the honest face of the fair-headed German. She sadly turned about and made her way back to her cavern. Her attempt to organise the Roman diaspora had completely failed. It was already organised in an fraternity, which excluded her, in case she did not bow her proud head for Christian baptism. The experiences of the day had deeply moved her. For the first time she had formed some conception of the intensity of the hatred, which she had drawn down on herself, and when she pondered over what she had done, she found the aversion of her fellow-countrymen thoroughly conceivable. She paid for this unsuccessful attempt by a number of sleepless nights and dreary days. But the trusting friendship of the new Alemannian inhabitants of the village soon healed up the wound. She continued her intercourse with these new neighbours, helped, advised, instructed, taught, whenever an opportunity occurred, and lived on with the strong impulse of making herself useful, even in little things, as her great plans had proved to be dreams

and froth. This wood life agreed with her personally. The blood rolled through her veins more easily than formerly in the narrow rooms of the Roman villa, or under the hot roof of the log-house. The once so delicate maiden had developed into a woman of savage beauty. The wood had bestowed strength and health on her. Uncared for, but twice as rich as formerly, did the dark hair fall about her brow, a healthy tan tinged her cheeks, and her arms worked with free play of the muscles at the mats with which she thought to pad her cave the following winter. For she could not even then bear the idea, that she finally must, as the old Wulf had told her, return to her house. Once only had she ventured beyond the precincts of the wood, to approach the Bühl at a spot from which she could look down on her court and fountain. But the low windows, behind which she had formerly stood, the trees under which she had sat with her child, the fountain, to whose prattling she had listened leaning on Rothari's shoulder, gazed at her as spectres of her own past; and once again brought it before her eyes under the most hideous distortions. It had required many days for her to overcome this

painful impression. During these, dread recollections came back to her, she gazed so wildly into space, that her visitors became terrified, and in horror one after the other stole away. The young men loved her, the women feared her, but all wished her to be queen, for they thought that she would raise Macrian to be king over Rome, so soon as he became her husband. With the exception of some dismal days, a peace such as she had never known before filled Jetta's bosom. When she saw the kindly blue eyes of the German children fixed on her, whilst she spoke to them of Rome's history, then a sort of motherly feeling arose in her, and she wished to cover up all these young birds under her warm wings, she wished to be a mother to this land, but not in the way desired by Macrian. When November came with its dreary fogs, then indeed did the numbers of her visitors lessen. The faithful Lupicinus kept up a huge fire before her cave, by whose flame, at times a hunter who had been pursuing foxes and badgers warmed himself, and round which gathered the women who had been picking up wood.

Moreover just as the winter threatened, another danger arose like to a cloud in her horizon.

Jetta heard through Lupicinus that the bishop of Lupodunum had arrived in the village on the other side of the Nicer and was treating with the chiefs, as to whether they would not be converted to believe in the pure Christ. The news affected Jetta deeply. Were a priest of the Christians to secure a footing, then her days in this valley were numbered. And she already experienced Anaklet's influence. The stormy autumn weather was not the only cause why the assemblies in front of her cave diminished. The followers of the bishop had rendered her an object of suspicion to many. The elders among the people disliked her recruiting for Rome, the women also easily suffered themselves to be persuaded by the cunning bishop that an evil charm dwelt in the stranger's black eyes, which was dangerous for their husbands. Movements such as excited Jetta must quickly be set to work, or they die away. That which is born from excitement, seethes and boils up for a while, then grows cold, or vanishes into smoke. She had not been able to hurry the Alemanni onwards to some determination, now a retrograde movement must take place. Jetta felt that, and gazed with anxiety into the future. The call was sent

forth through the Lupodunum district, that the Lentienses were arming for a fresh war against Rome. The inhabitants of the district conferred together as to whether they should join it or remain quiet. It never occurred to the elders to consult with Jetta on the subject. Thus the woman in the cave was forgotten by many. For a while the youth had been attracted by the novelty in the sacred wood, but with the excitement of a new war, the contest did not last out.

The isolated woman sat more and more alone in her cavern. Even Lupicinus had become another man. He feared for the safety of his soul since Jetta had so openly pronounced for the false idols, and the other Christians argued with him, that whosoever served the priestess, served her gods. With a serious look he appeared before her one day and explained to her that it was impossible for her to remain during the winter in her cavern, moreover he knew not, how much longer he might aid her, since the congregation threatened him with excommunication, if he did not quit her service. His advice to her was to return to her house, where the Alemannian serfs who were not under the orders of the bishop

would serve her faithfully. He himself would retire for a while to Lupodunum till he had disposed the bishop more favourably towards her.

Jetta answered not, but gazed sadly into space. The Alemann added however good-naturedly that he did not press for a decision, nevertheless Jetta should consider his proposition, and he parted from her with a kindly word. Another plan had however arisen in Jetta's mind. To wait here till the bishop worked out her expulsion, would be foolish, that she herself felt. She would therefore conceal herself till the evil feeling had died out. Once out of the way, her adversaries would calm down and she would gain time to consider what was to be done. She also called to mind a place of concealment, which would serve her as a refuge. If one climbed upwards from the pond where she had so often lingered with Rothari, following up the brook, one came upon a wall, inside which was the fountain head. It had formerly been a heathen chapel, dedicated to the nymph of the source, and had been used as fountain grotto during the Roman times. Then Lupicinus could make comfortable for her a small cell with moss and skins. Water was at hand, and he could

renew her provisions from time to time till fortune disclosed some new way. She called to her wolf and began her pilgrimage through the autumnal wood to the pond. Reaching the slope over the Bühl she turned away her face to the wood, so as not to see below that which was so painful to her. When she reached the pond, which stood there so dark and gloomy among the bald trees, black with the leaves which had fallen into it she shuddered. Could this stygian water be the same clear brook, which had one time reflected the image of her joy? Instead of pale water-roses, brown leaves now swam upon the dark surface, sinking down to the bottom only when thoroughly soaked. Following the brook rippling through the withered leaves, she climbed sick at heart up the ravine. The leaves crackled under her feet, and the wolf followed her hesitatingly. From time to time it stopped still and whimpered as if smelling out some danger. She at last reached the wall, out of which trickled the brook. In the bare ravine, piled up with dead leaves, the ruin seemed indeed less inviting, than as Jetta remembered it embedded among green bushes, blooming with blue bells and scented umbels, nevertheless she

thought she would at least examine the condition of the dry parts of the grotto. But as she entered through a hole in the wall, her companion howled aloud and at the same moment she beheld the glowing eyes of a she-wolf, which came towards her growling and gnashing its teeth. The brute couched angrily down, with hair up-raised and fiery eyes it prepared to spring. But at that moment Jetta's wolf attacked its enemy courageously. A fearful struggle began. Thus Jetta gained time to run down the mountain in swift flight, whilst the howling and gnashing of the contesting animals reached her ear.

The surprise had robbed her of all deliberation, and she again reached her cavern in breathless haste, sad indeed that her brave beast had sacrificed itself for her, and that she in her fright had not stopped to aid it. But how she rejoiced, when she beheld her faithful companion, which had already saved itself by a shorter route. Slowly did the poor thing creep out and lay down whining at her feet. It was covered with wounds, but knew that it had saved its mistress. Tenderly did Jetta stroke its rough coat, she fetched water from the brook and washed out

its wounds, for which it gratefully licked her kindly hand. Jetta had proved the beast's fidelity, but she had to give up the idea of returning to the grotto. The wood itself refused to grant her its hospitality.

CHAPTER XII.

Busy activity reigned in the valley of the Nicer and on the heights of Mons Piri. The young Augustus Gratian had ridden over in person from Alta Ripa to consult with Macrian as to the renewal of the alliance. Macrian was to promise not to aid the Lentienses, this was the proposal of the Romans, then the new Augustus would double his gifts. To this Macrian was not disinclined. He required peace, he loved gold, and the weapons, which according to treaty Gratian had sent him were better than those which his father was wont to send. But above all were the gifts bestowed on the king himself valuable for their splendour. And how graciously had the young prince explained the increased bribe. "As you," he said,

"will, as I hope, soon fight at our sides as the allies of Rome, it is an advantage to us, if you are well armed." Nevertheless the king was bound to consult the parliament of freemen and nobles, before he could consent to the treaty. "Send a man, who is not a soldier," Macrian required, "one of the secretaries, whom I can take along with me in the assembly of my people, for none of thy warriors may be suffered to ascend our holy hill and inspect our walls." The Romans met and after a while, Ausonius declared himself willing to follow the king, if he were allowed to bring his wife with him, as she knew the language of the Alemanni better than he did. No long time elapsed before that from the slope of the holy hill the smothered tones of the bull's horn summoned the free men to the Landesding. From all sides the men climbed up the hill and hastened to the prominent old tree standing in the middle of the ring, which the king had designated as Dingstätte. The tree in the Odenwald was known in the surrounding parts as the old pear-tree, visible from afar on the denuded height. To the Alemanni in the vicinity this tree was sacred, and many a man had seized his battle-axe with re-

doubled zeal, because it was said, the Romans would cut down, so soon as their castellum was ready, the holy pear, from which Mons Piri took its name even for them. The stone throne of their king had been set up once more under the shade of its thousand branches, and affixed to its black trunk was the red-yellow shield of the German alliance. The chiefs and freemen entered the inner ring, whilst outside shouted the commoners together with women and children. Near the stone throne of the king stood certain strangers, whom the Alemanni eyed defiantly. They were Ausonius and his wife, and near them the Arian bishop Anakletus and a venerable old man with silver-white hair, the Nicene presbyter of Lupodunum. When the men had assembled, the king mounted the throne, upon the old Wulf smote thrice his brass shield, and silence then reigned among the people. The freemen and chiefs arranged according to retinue and clan, approached closer to the king and formed a circle around the holy tree. Macrian now explained to the assembly in a few words, how the new Augustus of the Roman empire was anxious to strengthen the alliance, which his father had concluded with the people.

He had given the best weapons and handsome presents, to testify to the nobles his good will. He was a high-minded and well-principled youth, so it might be expected that he would keep his word. They did not want pastures, as did the Lentienses, and there existed therefore no cause for a new war. It was better to occupy the land they had won and wait till the gaps in their numbers had been filled up, for they were got too weak to settle down on the other side of the Rhenus in Alisat. He therefore as king counselled for peace, but should there be any one among the people, who thought otherwise, let him speak out his opinion. None moved; no one raised an objection, and when the king asked the question again, whether the alliance with the Romans should be prolonged as requested by Gratian, the warriors smote upon their shields as a sign of assent and called out their approbation. Alone the old Wulf growled, "we owe to yonder sorceress, that they have all become so Roman again."

Ausonius was delighted to have escaped so cheaply out of this savage company. He said a few words in Latin to assure them of the new

Augustus' great friendship for the brave king Macrian and his people, then he begged to be dismissed as his sovereign awaited him. Macrian gave him his right hand before all the assembly as a ratification of the alliance, but at the same moment he looked laughingly at Bissula and said: "Wouldst thou like soon another place as nurse, fair lady? I might have in one of my castles a prince to be taken care of."

"Thou would'st deal well with me," cried Bissula smiling. "The duty of a nurse is to heed that mother and child do not weep, thou hast experienced that I take good care of that." The savage king laughed and parted on good terms with the pretty woman.

When Ausonius and Bissula had departed, Macrian returned to his throne and said: "Another affair has to be settled this day by the Ding. Two priests of the Christ God are here present, who desire to be accepted in peace by us. We promised, before the storming of the camp, the bishop of Lupodunum, that the white Christ might have temples in our land, and that his priests should not be prevented from teaching. The bishop has since come to me and insists on the

expulsion of the other priest of Christ, who lives in Lupodunum, as he preaches a false Christ. But many among the Roman coloni of Lupodunum demand that the false Bishop be expelled as a false man, who does not think the truth in his own heart. To which of these two do you accord the hospitality of our district?"

Wulf knit his bushy brows and remarked, that the two smooth faces could not bear one another, they had better be both sent away. The gods of his people did not like the white Christ, who despised them. Wodan, Ziu and Donar had made the people of the Alemanni great, not the gods of the Christians. But others spoke in favour of the white Christ. He was good against the storm on sea, and against fever on the strand. They had seen great miracles, still greater were related which his servants had done through him. At these words old Wulf shook his head and angrily drew down his buffalo helmet over his forehead, so that the horns inclined as if for a charge. "You should not be at peace with a God, who insults our gods," said he savagely. "Should the Roman attack us, then can the white Christ not help us. He is an unwarlike God, who bears no

sword and knows not how to shoot an arrow, Ziu and Donar use sword and hammer; he however carries the cross on which they nailed him. Thus have I seen him in all the churches that we have burnt down. He is not a warrior, but the son of a carpenter, for this cause was he only, when I was young, the God of the slaves. If you admit him he will make our people cowardly and slavish. Ask this man, if he does not teach, that when a man gets a blow in the face, he should ask for another. Is it not so, old man?" he said turning to the presbyter.

"'And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other,' so says my Saviour," confirmed the old man with a kindly smile.

"And what says thy God?" asked Wulf imperiously of the bishop. Anakletus drew himself up proudly, and his eye beamed with the certainty of victory. "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, I will repay. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth."

The warriors murmured their approbation. This God pleased them better.

"Is not thy God represented as a lamb?" asked Wulf again of the presbyter.

"He is the lamb, that bears the sins of the world," said the old man with a gentle earnestness.

"And thine?" inquired Wulf, facing Anakletus.

Anakletus answered cunningly: "My Lord is a warrior on a white horse, and the host of the heavens follow him on white horses clothed in pure white silk, and he has a sword with which he smites the nations, and a rod of iron."

Again a murmur of applause ran through the ranks and many struck their shields. Macrian now stood up and said: "We cannot suffer both priests here, as they are at war with one another. Anakletus however helped in delivering up the camp of the Romans into the hands of our people. He has already our promise. He also belongs to those Christians who have been expelled from the court of the young Augustus, on the other hand the presbyter continues with the imperialists. The priest himself pleases me well enough, he appears to be a straightforward man and has kindly eyes, but his God is a God for poor people, but not for us. Therefore shall he go from here. We shall gratify the bishop, for he has a better God." The chiefs showed their approbation by shaking their shields and by shouts. The king now ad-

dressed the two priests with solemn dignity. "The freemen and nobles," he began, "have examined your request and they are of opinion that only the Christ of the emperor Constantius as formerly should have temples among us. Anakletus, who also helped us, serves him. Thy Christ," he said to the presbyter, "is the Christ of the Augustus and will aid the Romans, as the Christ of Anakletus helped us. Therefore shall Anakletus live in this district in peace, to thee the people refuse hospitality. Return to the halls of thy fathers, or go over the Rhene to the priests of thy God. Here art thou defenceless, and can'st bring no charge against him who offends thee." The old man made a motion of sorrow and dissent with his hand. He wished to speak and defend his God, but the king impatiently dismissed him. The old man left the assembly with bowed head, whilst Anakletus triumphantly took his place among the nobles. When the priest had departed, the bishop with great unction thanked the brave inhabitants for having taken him under their protection, for this would his God take the people under his protection and bless their fields and weapons. But to make sure

however of the protection of his God, the cross as his ensign should be planted among the other insignia of the tribes on the Giant's stone. He would also build on this mountain a chapel to St. Michael, out of the stones, which the Romans had already piled up. If moreover they were willing to place the sacred grove yonder under the care of one of his deacons instead of under that of the old woman, they would never regret doing so; but above all must Jetta, the sorceress, who dwelt in a cave close to the sacred grove be driven from the district. She was a Roman, and only spoke and worked for Rome. The whole of her energies were devoted to winning over the young men to enter Roman military service. Moreover she was skilled in magic and evil arts and already many complaints had reached him, as to how she injured those who would not join the number of her adherents. The bishop spoke in a mild tone but with great decision, whilst the king listened with sinister looks. As he heard this address made by the bishop he regretted that he had not retained the other Christians and rejected this one. But one chief after the other stepped forward and insisted on a stop being put to the

Roman woman's excesses. This hill had not been occupied for the purpose of supplying the Augustus' army with young soldiers; for which Jetta was continually recruiting. If the Lentienses were left in the lurch, so as to spare the forces of their own people, it was not to be permitted that their youths fought the battles of the Romans against members of their own Bund. Complaints were made about sorcery, about injuries which had befallen the man who had levelled the arrow which slew her father, till Wulf angrily objected to this old woman's gossip being introduced into the assembly. The king should warn Jetta, and if that did not do expel her from the district because she sided with Rome, but the parliament of chiefs should not trouble themselves as to whether she was agreeable to the priests of Christ and to timid women. This speech of the old man was applauded and he himself appointed to threaten Jetta. The king then asked if there was any other matter, which required discussion, and as no one came forward, he declared the Ding adjourned. The old Wulf was seen after the breaking of the meeting descending towards the Nicer in deep converse with the king. The

two only reparted on reaching the banks of the river, and as now Wulf entered a boat, to carry the king's message to the proud sorceress in the cave on the other side, the women and children sitting in front of the Alemannian huts, looked eagerly after the old man and his buffalo helmet, what could he now make of her: a queen or a vagrant?

The blow which threatened Jetta did not come unexpected to the prophetess. Since the bishop of the Arians had begun to bestir himself, Jetta had had a sure presentiment of coming struggles. Slight, but evident signs proved to her that a powerful hand was working against her. Her little friends remained absent, and it struck her, that children who crossed her path hurried away. Even on the most beautiful days she often found herself quite alone. She heard accidentally that in spite of her teachings and urgings it was thought to wage a new war against the Romans, nay more that illness and misfortunes were laid to the account of her arts. She dared not speak too openly with Lupicinus of the new turn of things. She feared that he would allude to his proposition, that she should

return to her house, and that she did not wish. That this struggle would end by her being driven away, she clearly foresaw. Since the November winds had denuded the trees of their foliage and that the bushes were bare, the valley lay clear before her and she could note with her clear vision all that was taking place. Thus on the morning of the Volksding the movement in the huts of the Alemanni had not escaped her. She heard the horn sound from Mons Piri, she saw how the people hastened in long lines up to the crest of the mountain, and how the men gathered around the sacred tree. She would have liked to have questioned Lupicinus as to what was taking place, but that very day he remained away. At mid-day she saw how the people on the mountain opposite hastened back to their houses. But no one troubled themselves about the strange Roman woman. She sat alone in the clear but cold autumn sun, and whilst she kept up her fire she pondered over as to how long her hermit life might continue. Her spirit was strong and tried by too many severe blows, for her to give way to a fear still entirely without form. She foresaw a struggle, especially with the bishop, who had

ever seemed to her to be a double-dealer but, she knew herself to be a match for him, yea more, she rejoiced at the excitement which would be introduced into her monotonous life by argument and counter argument. She had dedicated herself to the struggle for her gods; peradventure such discussions would cause the people to assemble once more around her cave. "At last!" she cried exultingly, as now a man's tread sounded on the dried leaves. She would now hear from Lupicinus what the danger was which threatened her. But it was not Lupicinus. Instead of the faithful steward the dread Wulf strode out of the wood.

The old man sat down uninvited by her fire, growled at the fog and rain, and praised the king's well built houses against which the storms rattled in vain. Jetta answered not, for the day was sunny, and there was no foundation for the old man's complaints.

"I am astonished at finding thee still alive," continued Wulf. "This is the month in which the wolves of the Wodanwald leave their ravines and climb down into the plain. Wait only for the first fall of snow, and then you will see, in what troops they scurry the woods."

"I hear them bark night after night," answered Jetta, "but they fear my fire, and my own beast protects me."

"War will soon break out again," said Wulf, and as Jetta looked inquiringly at him he proceeded: "Thou knowest that our priests also foretell the future from the eddies of the rivers and the neighing of steeds, and that the prudent man keeps eye and ear open, how the birds fly and the owl hoots. Never before have the wolves gathered in such masses in the valley and the ravens assemble in swarms, they know that they will soon find food on this open field. Then will it be bad to sit in the wood instead of in the fortified citadel of the king."

"If thou hast that only from the ravens," said Jetta, "then we can wait." But the old man did not let himself be put down. As the ravens and wolves made no impression, he began to speak of the Christian bishop, who had that day received permission from the Volksding to recruit for his God and to drive away sorcerers. Again Jetta looked at him piercingly and searchingly. "The people," said Wulf, "granted this day the request of the bishop of Lupodunum, he is to be allowed

to remain here to preach and to make smoke in their church houses, as they are accustomed to do. But the Christians do nothing by halves and share with no man. He has even asked for the expulsion of our priestess from the sacred grove, but above all he requires that we outlaw thee."

Jetta turned pale and looked darkly at Wulf. He however answered her pallor with a subtle smile. "Thou hast become accustomed to our people," he said; "the young men revered thee even as their queen, before that this priest came. But thou hast also seen, how they fell away from thee and turned to the new God. Art thou once driven away, then thou must hide in the gorges like a baited wolf till some one slays thee. Thou art no longer at peace with our people, outlawed by thine own. Where couldst thou go? There is neither room for thee on this side of the Rhene nor on the other. Take then the hand, which Macrian holds out to thee. He is a king, no boy cooing his love, and cannot come a second time to the woman who rejected his offer. Hast thou however reconsidered the matter, then say so and I shall arrange matters." Jetta thoughtfully leant her head on her hand and gazed sadly into space.

The old man thought already that he had broken down her obstinate mood, when she rose and drawing herself up to her full height, said: "Old man, spare thy words. Thou speakest the truth, neither on this side nor on the other side of the Rhenus may Jetta find rest, but between this side and that side flow the waters of the god. Sooner will the bed of the river receive Jetta's body, than the couch of the king."

"Think over what thou sayest," growled the old man. "Young blood is warm and the river is cold, life is sweet, death is bitter."

"Rather ten times death, than once disgrace," cried Jetta out of herself.

On this the enraged old soldier sprang up from his seat. "Then go from hence, thou fool, who calls it a disgrace to become the wife of a king. I would have protected thee against the murmuring, nasal priests. Now they may come to-morrow and smoke out thy cave. I myself will keep away the young men, who fret about thy dark eyes, in which madness dwells." In a fury did the old warrior turn his back on Jetta, who gazed after him indignantly. His anger gave her back her confidence. If Macrian still loved her,

so did she console herself, he would not deliver her up to any one. "They will for a while stand by the bishop, till he shows his claws, then all the more certainly will they return to me." Thus she shook her downheartedness away from her. The beauty of the day made her feel joyful and full of hope. She felt as every one does feel, who has been threatened for a long time by the same danger. He thinks, the misfortune will perhaps never come, because it came not for so long. Slowly did leaf after leaf fall from the old ash, which overshadowed her cave, and was blown into the entrance of her rocky chamber. She saw the wind playing with the rustling leaves and she rejoiced in the last clear days, which the autumn sun still poured forth. At times she dreamingly laid a dried twig on her glimmering fire and gazed at the blue rings of smoke. She felt serious, but fear was not in her. But on hearing men's steps again, she nevertheless shuddered. She thought the king himself was now coming and she thought to collect her thoughts, as to how she could best reconcile him, without however leaving him any hope of her acceding to his wishes. But to her astonishment Wulf again

approached at the head of the party coming up, and near him came the old priest Sunno, whom she but too well called to mind from having seen him on the memorable night in the sacred grove. Proudly and majestically did she lean back on her seat and with folded arms calmly awaited the event of the things about to happen. The men formed a circle around her and the priest holding a mysterious-looking half-pealed staff in his hand approached close to her. The other men fixed their eyes gravely on the ground; the priest however spoke these solemn words: "Because thou sidest with the foes of this people, because thou hast intercourse with the evil powers under the sod, because thou hast as house companion the gray beast of the forest and not man, because thou injurest men and cattle, because thou seducest children and boys, we extinguish thy fire, we refuse to thee the spring, we deny thee peace. We pronounce thee outlawed, peaceless, honourless, without safety, evil, banished, bodiless, so that none can do thee injury, as one who hast become a corrupt, debased creature." After having thus spoken the old man broken his stick in two halves and threw the pieces at Jetta's feet, saying:

"Thus do we break our agreement with thee, thus do we refuse peace to thee, thus do 'we extinguish thy hearth." On this he cast the coals out of Jetta's fire with his foot, and the men trampled them out. "Within the day and night hast thou to quit our district. All doors shall be closed against thee, thy resting place shall be destroyed, thy fire shall be extinguished, thou shalt have the use of neither wood nor field, nor thine own smoke. Our brooks shall not flow for thee, and cursed be the hand which gives thee food. We name thee without honour, we pronounce thee outlawed, we declare thee without peace in all ends and in all quarters of the globe. Thou shalt be free as the bird in the heavens, as the wolf which scours the forest. Freeman or slave may insult thee without redress, whoever will injure thee in skin or hair may injure thee, whoever will slay thee may slay thee. The inhabitants of the province and district break thy roof, nail up thy door, choke up thy well, extinguish thy hearth. Depart when the sun sinks, for before that a day and a night have past, thy life belongs to him who takes it, and if thou returnest, thou shalt ride a dried tree, thou shalt carry a

dog and a hawthorn clump around thy neck, and the lewd shall cast stones at thee and misuse thy body. We shall hang thee with a willow halter under the chin between heaven and earth, that the sun may shine on thy body, the wind blow over it and the crows and ravens peck and devour it. Thou shalt be a vagrant and be driven about wherever fire burns and earth produces, child calls for its mother, and mother bears child, wood supplies fire, ship moves, shield gleams, sun melts snow, feather flies, fir grows, hawk soars and the wind stays under both his wings, heaven arches, the world is built, winds war, the waters flow to the sea, and men sow corn. All companionship with good people shall be denied thee and every kind of dwelling, hell excepted. Any may beat thee wherever thou mayest be met, on water or on land, on ship or on a rock, on sea or on horseback, and none shall share with thee rudder or scoop, ground or deal. We take from thee thy landright and all thine honour, and place thee from justice into injustice, from grace into disgrace, from peace into discord, so that none, let him do what he will, can do thee injury. We give thy hair to the wind, thy body to the beasts

in the woods, to the birds of the earth, to the fishes in the waters, where each has free passage, shalt thou have none, and we send thee out into the four quarters of the globe."

On this the aged priest turned away from her so close that the folds of his robes struck her in the face, and the others followed him. The heavy tread of the messengers of the law might be heard going down hill, and Jetta remained there as if stunned. Even the wolf crouched close to her mute and motionless as if it felt a higher power, which broke over his mistress. "This is the recompense for severing thyself from thy people," passed through Jetta's mind, as a heavy weight seemed to check each pulsation of her heart. It seemed as if she had lost all elasticity. A vagrant woman should she wander over the earth, a woman on whom any man could lay his hands, against whom the women might close their doors. "They shall extinguish thy fire, our brooks shall not flow for thee, cursed be the hand that gives thee food," seemed to re-echo in her. For many weeks avoided as a beast in the desert, she was now quite alone in the world. The tree against which she leant had more right to life

and safety than she. Her head swam. In a sort of mysterious second-sight she saw herself seated in front of her cave, and she resembled the Roma Dia stamped on coins. Her brain glowed and her eyes shone in madness. Her oppressed heart felt relief in giving vent to an almost insane shriek: "Verily I am Rome, Rome desecrated by the barbarians!"

But did no means of safety exist? She who had imagined she could guide through her sacred rolls, sun, moon, and stars — she sat there helpless, a miserable woman. If she had but her sacred books, she thought, many a portal in the world would secretly open; could she but only set her foot in a palace, she would soon raise herself up again. The thought encouraged her. But at once Rothari's bleeding head appeared before her. With what sacred oaths had she sworn to abstain from the black art. Behind her she heard the whimpering of her baby boy who had fallen a sacrifice to these arts, and loudly weeping did she lean her head on her hands and the tears trickled down her fair face in torrents. Thus did she sit for a while and heard not the steps which approached her.

"Weep not, Jetta," now said a voice so mild,

so gentle, so kindly, that it seemed as if a warm hand had dried her tears. "Weep not, a friend has not forgotten thee." Jetta looked up. Her eyes grew bigger and bigger, but her face became stony, and horrified did she draw back into her cavern, for it was Gratian.

"Take away this hand, there is blood on it," shrieked her yelling voice, "and even if I were weeping in the tortures of Erebus, none of Rothari's murderers should pull me out, and certainly not Valentinian's son."

"Judge not the dead," said Gratian seriously, "Valentinian was a great man in spite of all his faults."

"Was? then is the tyrant dead?" cried Jetta in wild triumph.

"Whatever crimes he may have committed," said Gratian gently, "he was my father and has heavily atoned for them. Let me sit by thee, poor Jetta," continued he sadly, "I have much to relate to thee." Jetta moved not, he however sat down opposite to her on a mighty root of the old ash. "Thou only in thy wood hast not heard," he asked, "that of which since a moon the whole world is full of?" Jetta shook her head.

"But the Alemanni must have told thee of their proud conditions of peace, of which my father could never speak, without that the word stopped up his mouth through grief and rage?" A nod of the head was the only answer given by Jetta. She buried her head in her hands and let Gratian talk on. For a while he spake not, waiting for some signs of sympathy to encourage him to continue, she however kept her face concealed and acted as if the young man's account interested her in no way: "Mockery and contempt," continued Gratian sadly, "had thy new friends poured down on the Augustus and the treaty itself was a disgrace to Rome. Enough of this! On the same day we moved forward against the Quadi. Only by at once beginning the work for which he had endured the insolence of the barbarians on the Rhene, he found the pain more bearable and forgot the wound which Macrian had inflicted on his pride. I saw how the disgrace gnawed him to the heart, but he harshly rejected any consolation. How changed he was, and we all trembled before him, Justina as well as I. Even the way he carried on the war was terrible and inhuman. When I interposed he ordered me out of the camp. I was sent

to Gaul." A mocking laugh which escaped Jetta caused Gratian to again pause for a moment. But as she again was silent he continued his recital: "Burning and havocking the legions entered the country on the other side of the Ister. The entire harvest of the Quadi fell a prey to the flames, and as their provisions were at an end ambassadors were sent to Bregetio¹ to my father and prayed for peace in the name of their people now almost exterminated by war and suffering from famine. They shook with fear and seemed half starved to death. The emperor, in all the majesty of his court, beheld their pitiful aspects, their miserable weapons, the rags in which they were clothed, and when the strange messengers told him that in spite of their wretched appearance, they were the most noble of their tribe, he gave such a sudden burst of laughter that his followers thought he was mad. Then the veins swelled out in his forehead and he cried as if choking with rage: 'And I bowed down before Macrian on account of these famished grasshoppers. Has the empire come down to this that such a people dares to plunder us.' And

¹ Szöny not far from Komorn.

once more did the veins swell out as he cried, 'under my imperium, under me!' Then he turned pale, he staggered, those nearest caught him. Rage had killed him." Gratian stopped speaking. Even Jetta cast down her eyes.

Two powers seemed to struggle within her; the spirit of her ideal youth and the bitterness of the present. As she remained silent, Gratian asked gently: "And thou, Jetta, what sayest thou to the death of this man who loved Rome and thee?"

She hesitated, but the evil spirit maintained the upper hand: "Thus may all perish, who profaned my husband's sacred head!" she said in a hollow voice. Gratian shuddered, he wished to rise, but pity and love for the unhappy woman restrained him.

"I came, Jetta," he said earnestly, "to seek thee, to bring thee back to thy home, send me not away as some child, thou knowest that thou mayest not remain here."

"But in Rome they will receive me with open arms," said Jetta with bitter scorn.

Gratian motioned with his hand and looked at her sadly, as if he would say: not this tone.

Then he added: "I was away when the Alemannian torch fell into our watch-towers and the last cohort on this side of the Rhenus, led by a priest, evacuated so disgracefully this blood-steeped ground. Perhaps was I the less enraged against thee, that I did not see the horrors with mine own eyes. But I rode this morning over the battle-field. The walls of the camp still stand as they were left by the flames. The right angle is distinctly traceable which surrounded our camp and in the middle stands the burnt out prætorium. Round about lie the bleached bones, scattered or piled up as they had offered resistance or fled away on that dreadful night. They used to be thy friends, those who lay there unburied. I saw also fragments of weapons and limbs of horses. They had nailed however the heads to the trunks of the trees according to their barbarous habits. Who knows on what sacrificial stone flowed the blood of the prisoners. Lupicinus who guided me and from whom I learnt that thou wert still here, showed me the spot where Arator died, when the Alemanni wrenched the ensign of the cohort from the hand of the brave Gaius, when the defenders of the draw-bridge had fallen and when the victorious

barbarians spent the night over their mead, deriding our ensigns. All this renewed the grief of our men, and whilst Arator's head called for vengeance from the demolished walls, I heard curses levelled against his daughter. Certainly, Jetta, thou wert cruelly maltreated, but dost thou not also feel, what heavy guilt thou didst burden thyself with?"

Jetta had bent her head during Gratian's narration and gazed fixedly into space, but at this reproof she raised her pale face again and said bitterly, "I am punished, Gratian, as thou seest, other blasphemers still mock at the Gods."

"No Jetta, we also have reaped what we sowed. How could the Gods remain true to us, when we ourselves broke our faith. Thou wert only the implement of divine wrath, but now let the past be past." His voice began to tremble, in his eyes gleamed tender pity for this beauteous lost woman, and as she maintained her obstinate silence he said: "Come with me, Jetta, thou canst not remain here. Thou art exposed to every deed of violence and as hounded as thy own wolf wilt thou wander through the valley, till thou becomest the prey of the most bold. So soon as the night breaks in, rough knaves will visit thy cavern,

and plunder and burn down thy house on the Bühl. Come to us. Time will assuage Rome's hatred towards thee. For the time do thou hide thyself. I know an island on the lake of the Venetes,¹ where once Tiberius conquered the Vindeliki.² It lies forgotten like the island of the blest on the confines of the empire. It is surrounded by the green-gold waters in which the Alps reflect their snow-white heads, and here and there on the blue surface swim the triangular Latin sails. The German who lives opposite is under an engagement to me. He will protect thee. High cypresses and dark laurel bushes such as thou lovest still stand around the demolished villas. There shall we be happy and remember Rothari, when we gaze at the glaciers, as proud and as pure as he."

Jetta sighed deeply, she seemed moved. "Leave to the Germans their woods and swamps and fly to my heart," said Gratian tenderly. "I have brought Bissula with me here from Alta Ripa, under the pretext that we require her here as translator, so that it may not be said, that thou travellest alone with the soldiers. A ship lies ready

¹ Bodensee, or Lake of Constance.

² near Lindau.

on the Rhene, which under the sign of Augustus' dragon travels with safety. No curious eye can spy us out there and none need know that the ship bears Cæsar and his fortune. In a few weeks can I follow thee from Mons Brisiacus, where I take the command against the Brigavi, and when I come thou wilt stand on the roof of thy house and look down on the ship in the blue waters, which bears to thee thy friend, I swear it, thy most devoted friend." The wolf had up till then watched Jetta quietly. Now it began to whimper as if sniffing danger in the speech of the tempter. But a mild breeze from the south seemed to greet Jetta. It seemed as if the November blasts were giving way to a late summer. The sun shone warm as in spring. The dried branches of the ash rustled, the old firs bowed their heads dreamily and strewed their needles over the ground, and the mild south wind bore a potent odour of the forest on its damp breezes. It seemed to bring a greeting from southern climes to Jetta. She fixed her dark eyes on Gratian. He was no longer the boy, at whose wooing she had laughed. He was now a young man, whose cheek was covered with a brownish down, whose fiery eye looked greedily on her

shapely form, and she knew but too well that she had become more beautiful in the school of the wilderness, a fully developed woman. Things appeared before her as in a vision. He would accompany her to Alta Ripa, talked over by Bissula she would board the ship. He would then demand the price of her rescue, and she would have to pay it, and would pay. She shuddered. To the murder of the husband he would now add the disgrace of the wife. Justina was only half punished, and should he, the murderer, the false faithless friend escape unpunished? Gratian noticed her struggle and tenderly endeavoured to clasp her hand, she however drew it back and said coldly: "Art thou courting me?"

"Thou knowest I did ever love thee."

"And Constantia?" asked Jetta mockingly.

"Constantia is in Rome and will not disturb our own happiness on the lake of the Venetes." It was difficult for the proud woman not to smite the youth as answer across the face. Thus had he awarded to her the honour of becoming his mistress. "Thou shalt atone to me for this, and after thee, Justina!" shot through her passionately beating

heart. But she restrained herself and let him speak.

"I must now leave thee for a couple of hours," said Gratian. "Thou canst not remain here and not in thy house. Thou art not safe for one moment against violence and insult. Knowest thou of no place of concealment, where I can surely find thee, so soon as the sun is down?"

Again she hesitated for a moment as if she listened with half an ear to the youth's siren-song, and as if her former partiality for Gratian was moving her. But she recalled herself. She had sworn to avenge Rothari's death and the treacherously murdered man should have a sacrifice to his manes.

"If thou art in earnest," she said, "about saving me, do thou find thyself so soon as the sun is down near the pond behind, the Bühl, where we so often lingered with Rothari. If thou ascending the ravine followest up the brook, thou wilt come to an old wall, and there find me. Call out my name and I shall stand before thee, as if I had sprung from out the earth."

"Then haste, my beloved," cried Gratian joy-

fully. "So soon as the sun is down, I come to fetch thee."

He would have clasped her in his arms, but Jetta rejected his embrace with dark looks. He left her then with an expression of hope, and the wolf sprang up at Jetta with joyous bounds, happy that the tempter had left its mistress' side. Jetta looked after the quickly departing man with a bitter gaze. "Do thou only go then, thou wilt find an friend, worthy of so faithful a friend, she will drink with thee the brotherhood of blood, but this time in thine own. I will however find a ferryman who will take me across the Rhenus. A friend of our house is surely yet to be found who will take in Arator's daughter, if necessary under a false name."

CHAPTER XIII.

"Still, my wolf," said Jetta to the beast, who sprang about her as if demented, leaping at one moment into the cave, at another scurrying over the woods, fixing his glaring eyes on his mistress as he darted once more into the cave. "Quiet, my faithful companion, we have nothing more to do here, we must set forth." She then collected together the necessaries for her journey and a few small mementoes, and stepped out once more wrapped in a cloak with a small bundle in her hand, her head enveloped in a white veil, to begin her pilgrimage. The Rhine valley bathed in the light of the setting sun met her gaze from

among the bare trees. The valley which she was about to quit was dipt in gold. A mournful feeling at parting with the scene of her joys and sorrows shot through her heart. She looked up at the beeches on Mons Piri, which stood out darkly, she followed the golden course of the Nicer, which lost itself in the dark blue plain, she saw the Wodanwald and the lofty crest of Mons Valentiniani reared darkly up in the evening shades, and yonder whence she now would wander, gleamed the reddish blue mountains of Gallia like a pledge, that the Gods had sunshine also left for her, that there existed also a quiet nook for her storm-beaten heart, where flowers bloomed, where lambs fed on peaceful slopes, and where was a hut, in which dwelt happiness as well for her as for others. A gentler mood came over her and she turned back again once more to her grotto. "Farewell, thou faithful cave," she said, "who didst shelter Jetta, as the storm rent the heavens, thou silent cell, where I was alone with my grief and only thy voice gave answer to my voice. Farewell also, thou much loved valley! Thy fresh green will I never more behold, but I bless thee for all the flowers with which thou

didst adorn the garden of my childhood." Then her eyes sought once more the opposite slope, over which the evening sun poured down its clear fire-like rays and behind which stood Arator's villa. "Farewell, you ancient trees under which I lost my heart to him, and thou pattering marble fountain, near which I dreamt my maiden dreams. Mayest thou recount to others such sweet tales, and may they end more happily," she added sadly. She was about to depart with a tear in her eye. But the wolf at her side barked and gave out a deep growl which betokened the presence of a foe. Jetta now heard a sound which grew louder and soon reached up to her from all sides. It was like the sound of many feet on the dried leaves around and then again the buzzing of an excited crowd. The wolf sprang some yards forward and howled so savagely, that Jetta involuntarily looked around for a weapon. But she saw nothing but the broken hazel stick which the priest had thrown at her feet. It was half peeled and with its black and white serpentine twists resembled Circe's staff. She took it up. She might perhaps had had time to escape, but of that she did

not think. If her hour was come she would end it honourably and she thanked the Gods, that they had permitted her to complete the work of revenge on the most faithless of Rothari's murderers.

The news that Jetta had been outlawed had spread like wildfire among the inhabitants of the valley and nowhere were louder shouts of malicious joy heard than in the pagus of the Nemetes, where the coloni rejoiced that the treacherous woman had met with her reward. Above all others, shouted and exulted the little Volcius, who ascribed to Jetta the ruin of his business and the whole of his misfortunes. The Alemanni gathered also on the banks of the Nicer and wondered that the king had so soon put in execution the decree of the Volksding. They could not at once determine on carrying out the cruel sentence against the outlawed woman. Both groups exchanged looks to see what the other would do. The Italians first began to move. Volcius, his plump wife and the fat priest of Cybele yelled before the houses, that all should arise and smoke out the witch's cave. She must be paid back for the injury she had done to the camp and villages.

As the Italians moved upwards the Alemanni determined to join them. Not as if incited by the great hatred which inspired the Italians, but they wished to see what would take place. Evil minded scoundrels thought in their own hearts to give way to their passions, to plunder and to make a disturbance. The women joined them to prevent any cruelty, the children wept, that the kindly lady was about to be driven forth and ran by the side of their parents praying for forbearance. The small apish Volcius had hurried on a-head, but on reaching the wood he stopped. He feared that the sorceress might level a curse at his head. Only when they came in sight of the German house, did he enter trembling with his wife and companions into the wood. Suddenly he again halted. He had heard the howling of the wolf and remembered that he carried no weapon in case the beast flew at his throat. Thus the Alemanni were the first to reach the cave. With dark looks did they gaze on the sorceress prepared for departure, who viewed them with cold, severe mien. The superstitious barbarians trembled before this pallid face and demoniacal eyes, which betrayed no fear. The children passed close to

their mothers tremblingly and the women looked with pity and sorrow on the defenceless woman. Now only did Volcius and his companions dare to advance. "Cut her off," he shrieked, "the murderess must not escape, string her up in front of her cave." On this Jetta drew herself proudly up to her full height, and drew with her magic rod a circle in the air, crying with threatening voice: "He who steps beyond this circle is the child of death." Loudly shrieking the plump Lucia fell backwards; all sorts of colours danced before her eyes. The black and white wand seemed to emit sparks and she feared she was within the magic circle. Jetta made use of her terror. "Dost thou understand, why croak the ravens?" she cried, "for thy body, for thy body!" "Look on this wolf," she continued as she fixed her dark eyes on the encircling crowd. "It was human as thou art, I showed him kindness, nursed him when he was ill, spoke to him of Rome and all its glory. He betrayed me — so I changed him into a wolf."

The animal heard its name, raised its head and licked Jetta's hand, when she however roughly repulsed the mark of devotion it began to howl

mournfully. Once more did Lucia Vera shriek with terror at the animal's confirmation of the sorceress' statement. Jetta now approached the evil-disposed couple with flaming eyes. "I will change thee into a goose," she said to the trembling woman, "and thee into an ape for thy wickedness in case thou dost not return home." She angrily raised her pealed magic wand, her large eyes flamed, but at once Lucia Vera scampered down the hill howling, for such a metamorphosis did not seem impossible to her, and her cowardly husband followed her cursing.

"What doest thou here, unworthy glutton, traitor of the great Goddess?" now asked Jetta in a commanding tone of the fat priest of Cybele. "Shall I inform Gratian how thou hast joined the Germans?" He also departed, he could not face those terrible eyes. "Kneel, children," now said Jetta in a gentle voice to the children, "kneel," and accustomed to obey the woman of the wood, the children sank down on their knees one after the other. "Kneel down," repeated Jetta imperiously to the women, "that my Gods do not punish you," and her eyes flamed. One woman after the

other followed the example of the little ones. But the men remained defiantly leaning against the trees. The frenzy of the Pythia now came over Jetta. With wild gestures and flaming eyes she turned towards the men. "On your knees shall you hear what my God says to you." Her loosened hair flew in the winds, her picturesquely thrown back veil blew around her head like a flying pinion, her eye flamed, as she raised her Circe wand and rushed towards the nearest man, who stood leaning against the tree. She felt at this moment as if she could have commanded heaven itself to hurl its bolts against these dull barbarians. "Down," she cried, "down," and she stretched her hand out towards the hesitating man, but he shuddered at any contact with the black ringed wand and threw himself trembling on the ground. The others followed his example. Breathing deeply, Jetta now stood in the midst of the kneeling people. Her cheeks glowed with the tumult of passion, her bosom heaved, she had to collect herself before addressing the crowd. When the kneeling men cast covert glances towards her, to see what she was about to do, they saw the sorceress in the midst of the rays of the

setting sun, surrounded by its fiery glare. She stood in her white garments in front of her cavern like a flame of fire.

"I have done you good," she now began in her deep serious voice: "I have brought happiness to you from the first hour, that you saw me on this mountain; I have given you this valley, I showed you the way, I stormed with you the fortified camp, I have humbled my people and have exalted you, I have shown you springs ye knew not of. I blessed your fields, I gave you clear skies and genial showers in due season, I taught you what is good and great and wished to make you mighty and wise. You however rewarded me with ingratitude. You extinguished the fire at which I warmed you on cold days, you refused me the water from which I gave you to drink when you thirsted, you denied me the peace which I preached unto you. I have fed, taught and instructed your children and you cursed the hand raised to help me. Freeman and knave shall insult me with impunity, thus runs your senseless decree. Between heaven and earth you would hang my body, said the shameless man, that the sun shine upon it and crows and ravens

peck and devour it. Thus runs the fool's speech of your Sunno, grown gray in dishonour, and of the hoary Wulf, who yet disgraces his white hair on the day before his death. You fools, as if you had the power to injure Jetta, who can order the stream to flow backwards when she thus wills it, and hurls Sun and Moon against one another when it seemeth good to her. Think you, that I had remained here if I feared you, or that Jetta had not known your plans, she who hears and understands the music of the spheres, the rustling of the clouds? Now hear you, how Jetta avenges herself!" A shudder ran over the crowd and the women raised their hands imploringly. "I bless this valley," began Jetta after a pause in her sonorous melodious voice. "I bless it, that it may bring forth fruit in excess of all other valleys of the Wodanwald. So far as the sun melts the snow, so far as heaven is arched, so far as the winds roar and men sow corn, so far as the hawk flies, shall its eye behold nothing fairer than this hill, than this river, than this district. Fishes shall abound in its green river, sweet grapes shall ripen on its sunny slopes, your huts shall become houses, your villages towns, princes shall dwell

on the crest of your hills and from East and West, North and South shall people flock to behold the blessing which Jetta bestowed on this valley. Hear, you Alemannian people, this is Jetta's vengeance!" The children began to weep, the women to sob. "And now farewell," said Jetta curtly. "Farewell," "forgive us," "we thank thee," was muttered here and there in tearful voices. But Jetta had already disappeared together with her wolf in the gloomy wood. None dared to stop her, none to follow her. She strode on with steady pace and upraised head among the bare trunks. The true Roman pride, the recognized consciousness of her higher power, had once more taken possession of her. Could she now doubt that she was as great a magician as either Circe or Medea? She doubted not. Her cheeks glowed with triumph, her eyes gleamed and she cast aside the dried leaves crackling under her feet, as if she thought to scatter all opposition of the world in a similar way. Even the wolf seemed to know that they together had obtained a great victory. It bounded about as if crazy, rolled gleefully among the dry leaves and ran round Jetta in ever increasing bounds and circles. Thus

did the outlaw proceed on her journey through the woods unassailed.

The depressed mood which had weighted her down for a time when facing the curses of the Alemanni had now left her. After the new proof of her higher power she felt strength enough in herself, to fight her way through a world of enemies. She was as in a state of intoxication, and she felt that to such a favourite of the Gods as herself nothing was impossible.

Whilst she thus walked on buried in deep proud thoughts, considering by which route she could best reach the road to Noviomagus, to claim the hospitality of Arator's former companions, she heard her name loudly called. A hurrying foot-step approached. It was Lupicinus. Thus the faithful servant had not quite abandoned her and she halted. She would at least bid the Christian farewell and thank him for his kindness, which he had shown her.

Perhaps would he accompany her to a new asylum. He came running up the hill and then cried quite out of breath: "Praise be to the Lord, that I found thee! I thought thee already

lost, as I heard in the village that they had marched out to execute the sentence against thee. Now are we saved. I spent the whole morning with Gratian, the new Augustus. He appoints for thee a place of refuge, and wishes to see thee in person, to offer thee his aid."

"And dost thou believe," said Jetta sternly, "that thy mistress will throw herself into the arms of her husband's murderer? Was it not Gratian who twice shot at Rothari? On the day of the hunt, so soon as he saw that I preferred Rothari to him, on the sacred hearth of the house itself, the very day he returned to the Nicer? He himself accompanied Rothari to the Giant's stone, where they murdered him like a beast of sacrifice and my own father was priest. Him, Lupicinus, dost thou offer as protector to Rothari's widow?"

Lupicinus lifted up his hands protestingly. "No, no, no," cried he rejoicingly. "That was the best news I heard from him. I told Gratian without naming thee, that some one had tried to make us on the Bühl believe that he was the cowardly archer, who had wounded our master. Thou shouldst then have seen the indignant rage

he fell into. 'Do I look like an assassin,' he cried, 'who shoots with poisoned arrows? I found the arrows in the possession of the only enemy Rothari ever had and whom I name not, thy mistress however knows her — I stole the missiles away from her to show them to Rothari and to warn him. I offered myself as his companion to the altar so as to be ever at his side and to protect him with my own body. The wretched Rothari saw however the arrows in my quiver before that I could explain matters to him. He was thus deceived about me, rejected my companionship and delivered himself up into the hands of his murderers.'"

Jetta looked at the messenger with increasing pallor, as if hearing her own sentence. "Thou liest, man of death," she stammered.

"May the saints forsake me in the hour of my death," cried Lupicinus, "if I lie. Gratian swore to me by the sacred head of his mother, that he was innocent."

"Then tenfold woe on me who wished to punish him and he has sinned in no way. Just Gods, why did I not leave to your all-seeing eye

the vengeance which you reserve to yourselves. Nevertheless there is yet time. Hasten to the camp and see Gratian, tell him, he must be prudent in going to the pond where I gave him an assignation. Wolves herd there, and their numbers increase daily. In the meanwhile I will hasten thither by the higher road, so as to reach there before him, in case thou dost not find him below. He must not go up to the spring, there lie the wolfish brood, which should have torn him to pieces. Come for me to the pond, but bring torches and weapons, so as to frighten off the brutes."

"But thou thyself, a defenceless woman, wilt thou expose thyself?"

Jetta drew herself up proudly. "Dost thou think that the wolves will touch Jetta? She who tamed the Alemanni, who drove the malicious Volcius to flight, she will rout the wolves also. Fear nothing on my account."

Lupicinus hesitated. "That is tempting God," stammered he.

"Hasten," she cried imperiously, "hasten to warn Gratian. I will take care of myself. Hasten

before it be too late." Lupicinus could not resist the impetuosity with which she urged him. He hastened down the mountain, whilst she flew towards the pond, so that Gratian should not precede her thither. "The sun is not yet set, thanks be to the Gods, he cannot yet be there," she cried breathing more freely. Thus she reached the pond in the woods, which shimmered in the yellow evening sun-light. Gratian must pass by here, in case he wished to reach the well. She stood still breathless with outstretched ear. The wolf had only followed her unwillingly to this place. Silent and trembling it laid itself at her feet. Did it sniff danger or did it remember the last encounter, which they had both escaped but with great trouble? It pressed its head to the ground shyly, as if it feared to betray itself. She could indeed have simply put off Gratian, but she knew not whether Lupicinus could yet reach him before that he started to meet her here. And now she indeed wished to be met. Was his hand clean, then she did not hesitate to clasp the hand which the young Augustus stretched out to her, then indeed all was right and she also was safe. She now felt as if all her cares and sorrows had

suddenly fallen away from her. She would return to the world at the side of the Augustus and he would then have to choose between Constantia and herself. After that the thorn which had stung her so deeply had been extracted from her mind, the milder instincts of her female nature came uppermost as if of themselves. Here by this peaceful pond where every tree, every ripple of the water, every sighing of the woods reminded her of the days of her former life of love, a burning thirst for happiness with power, took possession of her soul. The memory of the time, in which she was loved, in which her life was necessary to another, in which she felt herself unceasingly supported and protected by him, urged her like an interceder seeking to lure her into Gratian's arms. Ah, how happy had been those days till the dread loneliness, the deep solitude followed, in which the wood and her cave were her only friends. She felt that she was about to part from Rothari. A breath seemed to pass over the leaves, flattering love wooed and a voice said in her heart: "For many a day hast thou cursed Gratian and he was pure of all blame, thou owest him an atonement." She felt

her infidelity towards the dead, and yet it was only her recollection of him, which rendered her accessible to a new happiness.

In the mean while the wolf at her feet began to move restlessly. It threw its head up in the air, its hair stood on end and it began to growl. The evening shadows had grown darker and Jetta could no longer clearly distinguish the objects in the depths of the wood. But she noticed a dark object behind the nearest bush. The object moved and two green eyes gleamed upon her. The enemy was drawing near. Slowly does it crawl like a snake nearer and lies down crouching in a ditch. There it stops without moving. But yonder — and yonder — and yonder, everywhere the green lights appear. And now near the spring above all is life. A husky howl, a hollow yelp, together with a long spun-out bark might be heard in the distance. "They come in troops," cried Jetta turning pale, "but I shall tame the beasts as I did the men." She lifted a heavy stick from off the ground and leant up against a stout beech so as to protect her back. She thought to repel every attack, till Gratian and Lupicinus came to her rescue. How astonished

they would be, if Jetta conquered also in this last struggle. "The beasts of the Wodanwald may come on," she cried. "Attack, you dogs of the Gods, if you dare. Here stands Jetta, who will oppose you!" And now the forerunners of the barking troop burst forth from out the bushes. Jetta's wolf had up till then lain down whining on the ground. It now took to flight. It escaped howling and with drooping down tail into the darkness. Jetta's opponents were now already closing around, huge meagre brutes. But the eye of the tall white-clad figure of the prophetess had power likewise over the dæmons of the forest. The first halted growling and the remainder of the pack following checked their headlong speed. The beasts formed a regular circle around their prey. The flaring green eyes glared around, the white teeth gleamed on all sides, as they approached closer and closer. The foremost prepared to spring and Jetta leant hard against the tree, waiting for the attack. But why should she fear? Had she not at one time put the she-wolf in the wood to flight, which seemed ten times more powerful than these famished jackals, and then she fought without a club merely with the lightening

glance of her eye? "Dare to touch Jetta," she cried in an imperious voice, as she raised her weapon and tempting her Gods rushed at the foremost of the grim pack. The cowardly brutes scattered on all sides. But at that very moment she received a blow from behind. A cunning old wolf, who had avoided her eye, had ventured on a spring. Jetta fell to the ground — and the whole pack was on her. Her hour had come. Jetta's death sigh died away amidst the howls of the beasts, who fought over their prey. A moment afterwards a red light appeared in the far distance. Shouts were heard in the valley. The pond reflected the glare of lights and torches. On this the leader of the hellish brood raised its head and gave a short barking call and at once the others left the body. An angry howl was heard, but the lights terrified the brutes. The leader wheeled about and the whole pack galloped up the valley and disappeared in the darkness. The shades of twilight wove once more their veil around the lovely pond and the white raiments torn by the wolfs gleamed like ghosts in the night. The trembling waters reflected the image of the disfigured bleeding corpse. All was once more so

still in the dark ravine, that even the fall of the dried leaves might be heard. Nothing moved, as Gratian and Lupicinus approached with rapid steps. "Jetta, Jetta!" sounded over the desert hollow, but echo alone gave answer. Again they both shouted her name, but all remained silent. "It seemed to me just now as if I heard the yelling bark of wolves, but only in the far distance," said Lupicinus. And again echoed the shout "Jetta, Jetta!" "Something here is not right," said Gratian. He lowered his torch and strode forwards searching around. With a shout of horror he came upon a shred of Jetta's veil and hurried weeping towards the pond, which reflected dazzlingly the red light of the torch. Suddenly he stood still with very terror, a mangled corpse lay at his feet. Only the noble countenance remained undefaced and gazed at the dark heavens with an expression of challenging defiance. "Romulus and Remus," stammered the horrified Augustus, "here lies the victor over Rome's last cohorts torn to pieces by your wolf. You would not that I should save her." The young men stood overwhelmed with grief as they looked upon the piteous remains of the beautiful woman and repentance and sorrow at his selfish wishes

filled Gratian's soft heart. "Let us bury her here under these shady trees," he said to Lupicinus. "She could not have a more beauteous grave, even were she to rest in the Via Appia." Carefully did the two men dig out with their broad swords a cool soft bed, from which with their own hands they picked out the stones. In this they laid the body which they decked in the shreds of her white garments with green pine branches and wide spread ferns. Over the soft earth of the hill-side they rolled a huge block of rock, so that no foe could disturb the rest of the unfortunate woman, whose heart during her life time beat so hotly and so passionately. Midnight was passed and the moon filled with her pale soothing light the solitary ravine in the forest, as they finished their hallowed work. One more prayer did they breathe over the little mound, then they hastened to their horses and galloped across the dark plain to Alta Ripa. These were the last Roman hoofs which left their prints in the sand of this plain.

Fair-headed German children related after a time in the village, how they had found a dead wolf near the pond in the beech groves, and the

boys asserted that it was the animal belonging to the sorceress whom their king had driven from the land. But it was only when Lupicinus returned, that the manner of Jetta's death became known.

Jetta's name is yet affixed at the present day to pond and cave, but only dim records of her magic power, of the blessing which she bestowed on the valley, and her death through wolves in the Wodanwald, live in the minds of the people. Old beeches and ashes droop their branches in the still, green pond, and over the ravine is heard the long drawn plaintive cry of the bussard, as it soars upwards in wide circles and finally hangs motionless in the air over the valley, which it considers as its own since the gray beast of the forest forsook it.

Valentinian's fortress at Alta Ripa held out for thirty years against the attacks of the Alemanni, till finally it succumbed at the end of the century before the irresistible advance of the Germans. The Rhine however altered its course and rolls its green waves over the fortified home of the mighty emperor. Only the foaming of the waters as they break against the hewn blocks

still shows the place and whosoever crosses over to the village of Altrip, to him the gurgling eddies tell where stood the palace of Alta Ripa, in which the emperor signed edicts, which we yet possess, and his wife brought down upon Jetta the misfortunes, which we have related to our readers.

THE END.

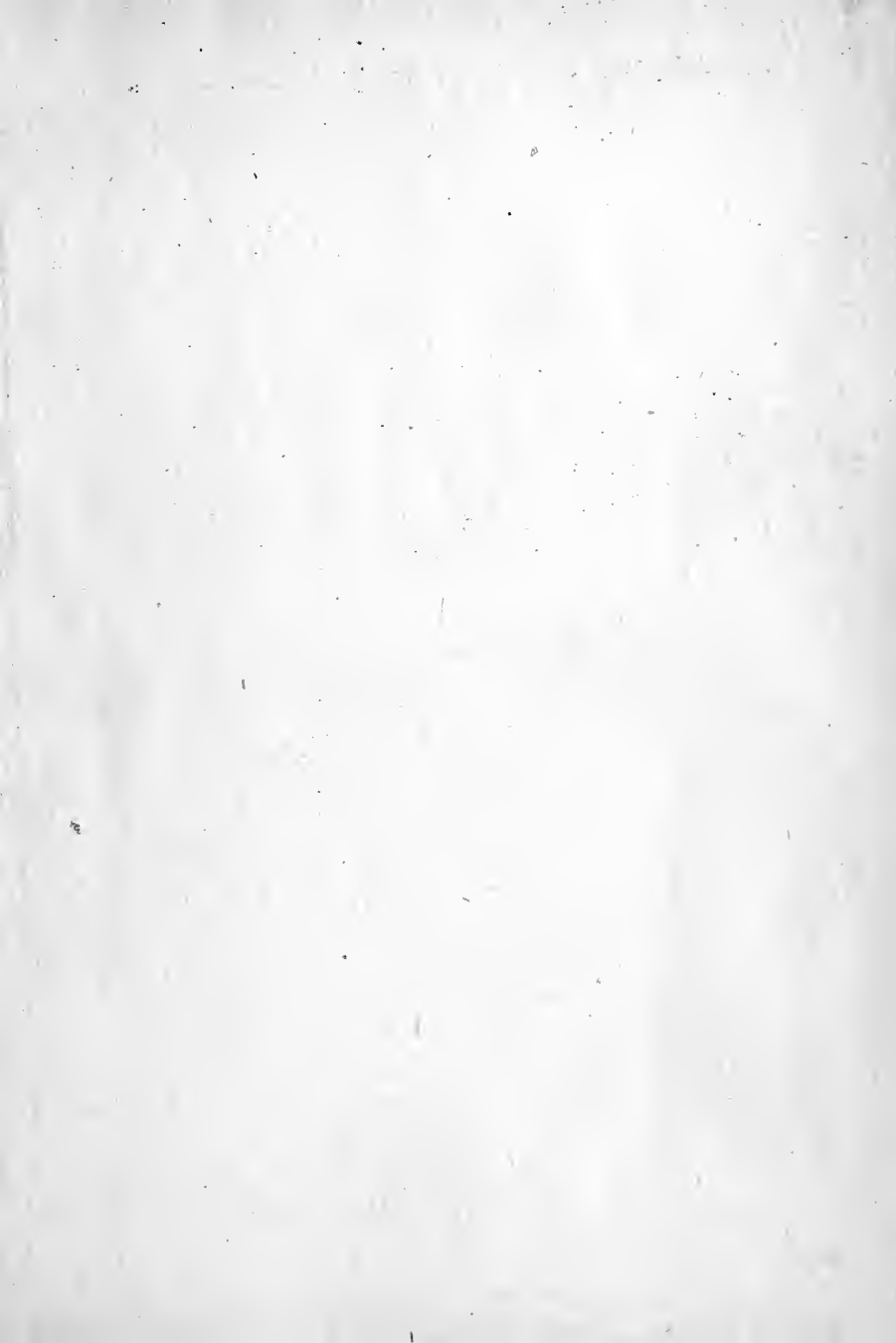
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